

Of The Lord's Supper

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[0 : 0 0] In Luke chapter 22, we see here at verses 19 and 20, where the Lord says, He took bread and gave thanks and breaking and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you.

This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you. As most of you know, we've been working in the mornings through the next section of a biblical basis for our church's confession of faith.

And we're coming this morning to the basis of chapter 29, which is entitled Of the Lord's Supper. In previous weeks, we've looked at the sacraments in general and what they are and what they indicate, the signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

Then we looked last Lord's Day at baptism in particular, and then we look at the other sacrament this morning, which is the Lord's Supper. Now, it's one of these things which is, it's a lot deeper than most of us probably recognize and acknowledge, or perhaps we do recognize, because it's something which, it's almost like a rite of passage for acknowledging the Lord publicly.

When we become converted and we profess our faith in Christ, this is the marker, this is the outward token of our having professed faith in Christ. We sit at his table, we partake of these elements of bread and wine, sanctified in this special way.

[1 : 3 0] But we're not perhaps entirely sure and clear, exactly what's going on at the Lord's Supper. And how is it, we know it's not magical, we know it's not the physical body and blood of Jesus, but at the same time, perhaps we partake, expecting something to happen inside us, expecting something to be changed in us by the physical partaking.

We know some of the things, it's not, we don't know exactly what it is. And I would have to say at the outset, nothing that we see today, and nothing that we expound with today, will exhaust the depths of God's truth, of what is going on in this sacrament.

It is a deep thing. But we can recognise some of the things that the Lord's Supper is intended to be, what it is, as well as some of the things, as we looked at the last Lord's Day of Baptism, some of the things that it isn't, what it is and what it isn't.

And there are five main things, which in a sense are covered by what the Lord's Supper is, which certainly as far as our church's confession of faith is concerned, they give these descriptions, and they give a biblical basis behind them.

First of all, it is a remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in death. Now, when we looked at, with the children, you know, a queen, and she became queen in passing, of her father, George VI, and when he died, when the king died, and she became the new queen, and so on.

[3 : 0 4] It's because of somebody's death that she enters into that reign. She enters into that royal stature. We, in a sense, enter into the status of royal children.

We have that purpose of adoption because Christ has died. And therefore, it is a remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in death, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

And as we read each time that we do undertake the Lord's Supper, in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 26, For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come.

So, because it is a remembrance of death, it is a solemn thing. It's a serious thing. I know there's a tendency nowadays, in some parts, perhaps, to try and turn it into just a big happy celebration of how great it is, yes, to meet the Lord.

And isn't it great that we're all saved and redeemed by what Christ has done? Yes, there is a certain celebration element in it, but it is, at the end of the day, a remembrance of the Lord's death.

[4 : 12] It is a solemn, somber, serious thing. It's one reason why, you know, in olden times, when the elders were taking out the elements to the people from the table, they would, in olden times, they would wear morning dress.

They would wear, you know, the black tails, and white shirts and black ties. And then, more recently, in my own memory, I always wore white shirts and black ties for the Lord's Supper.

It's the commemoration of the Lord's death, remembrance of his death. It's a solemn, and a serious thing. And when believers sit at the Lord's table, that is partly what they're doing, is, you could say, the first aspect of what they're doing.

They're recognizing that the liberty that they have is because of Christ's death upon the cross. And nobody can think of Christ's death without being moved, without being humbled, without being solemnized by all that he endured, all that he went through.

There is a tendency, as we say nowadays, to almost trivialize death. And we see with, you know, celebrities, and their funerals, and they're playing their favorite pop song, and somebody gives a eulogy, and everybody's trying to be brightly colored, and happy about it, and all go for a drink afterwards, and some will tell another.

[5 : 30] It's all big, almost like a celebration. Yes, a celebration of their life, but almost a defiance determined, we're not going to be put down by this. We are going to live life to the full, but they're not living life to the full if they don't know Christ.

As we remember his death, so we enter into the life that he has purchased for those that love him and trust him. So it is a remembrance of his death.

Secondly, it is a sealing. We talked about seals in the previous weeks, how in days before, people could read and write so well, they'd put their seal at the bottom of a document, or a page, or a letter, or whatever.

But a sealing is the imprint of the owner's mark, the sealing of all the benefits of the Lord's Supper to believers.

You know, Jesus said in Mark, account of the gospel, chapter 14, it's slightly different wording than he's got in Luke. So he says, as they did it, Jesus took bread and blessed and break and gave them to him, take, eat, this is my body.

[6 : 35] And he took the cup when he had given thanks, he gave it to them. They all drank of it. He said unto them, this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. They are entering into this covenant.

They're entering into what Christ has done. His broken body, his shed blood. It is like they are marked with it. They are sealed with it. It enters into them and becomes part of them.

They are sealed. Just as, as we mentioned in previous weeks, when you sign a document, you sign a letter, you sign a check, or a form of age, you are sealed, you are transmitting your identity.

onto that page, onto that document. God is transmitting his identity onto his people. The sealing of the benefits of Christ's death, Christ's wiping away of sin, Christ's payment for the price of sin, is sealed to his people.

A remembrance of his death, a sealant of all benefits to true believers. There is also, a sense in which, it's not just sort of, well, we sit at the Lord's table, we partake, that's it, and away we go, and as if it never happened.

[7 : 45] It's meant to be part of an ongoing, relationship with the Lord. It is a, a source of spiritual, nourishment, and growth in him. You know, as Paul said, you do show the Lord's death, till he come.

You know, this is a new testament in my blood. This do you as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. As often as you keep on doing it, you're meant to keep on doing it. You're meant to keep on remembering his death.

You're meant to be growing in grace, and in knowledge, and love of the Lord. And one way that we can grow, you know, if you've got a young child, one reason why a child in a poor, impoverished country might not grow as strong and healthy as a child in a comparatively more wealthy country, is because of the food supply.

If one is malnourished, it doesn't eat and drink enough, its growth will be stunted, its development will be stunted. But the one that's getting plenty of healthy food and drink, it will grow well.

It will have plenty of flesh, its muscles will grow, its health will be stronger, the height and the bones will grow better. Because of the supply of nutrients, it will grow and develop as it needs to.

[8 : 52] The impoverished child will not. And so this is meant to be part of what feeds our souls. It feeds us and nourishes us, the spiritual nourishment and growth in him.

It's meant to be ongoing. You can't just feed a child once and say, well, that's it. If you come back in five years, we'll feed you again. And it needs every day. There has to be a constant feeding, a constant supply of the nourishment that its body needs, and there has to be a constant supply of what our soul needs.

We should be in an ongoing relationship with Christ all the time and every day. The Lord's Supper is not every day, of course, but it is a more solemn and, shall we say, perhaps more formal remembrance of his death.

When we come together certain times of the year and remember it in this way, there is this nourishing, or there should be this nourishing of the soul and this growth in him.

And once we have received of these things, once we have been blessed by these things, there ought to be, the next thing, further engagement in and to all the duties that we have to Christ and to each other, of course.

[10 : 06] If somebody's professing faith in Christ, if they're partaking of the Lord's Supper, and that doesn't just mean they carry on their life as though they weren't converted anymore. It means that there's going to be changes in their lives, and they must be the more serious about living for Christ and fulfilling the callings and the tasks of their new vocation in Christ, their new relationship with him, because they have eaten his bread and drunk his wine.

They have partaken of the spiritual symbols in his body and blood. They have known his hospitality, his blessing, and therefore that is meant to encourage them.

It is meant to strengthen them, to further engage them for the work, the duties, the tasks that are before them. If you want to strengthen and encourage somebody to do better, well, you can either, yes, you can chastise, you can criticise or whatever, or you can give a word of encouragement.

The best teachers when I went to school were always those, not who would rule you with fear and make you desperate not to make a mistake, because that's the surest way you would make mistakes, that those who would praise up the little bit you've done well and encourage you, give you a little word of encouragement, and a wee pat on the shoulder, of course you couldn't pat on the shoulder nowadays, because that would be assault or abuse nowadays in the classroom, but in those days, a wee word of encouragement, a wee pat on the shoulder, a wee word of praise, and that engages and encourages you to want to do better, to want to do more, to work even harder, because that just gives you a little boost, and the Lord's Supper is meant to be a boost to our soul, to our need, so that we are further engaged, strengthened, encouraged in all the ordinary duties of our Christian lives.

And ordinary life is filled with day-to-day duties. One reason we may feel in our ordinary lives that we don't make as much progress as we want, we don't get half the things done that we want, is because there's so much else to do.

[12 : 12] There's so many things that are ordinary, that are routine, but they've got to be done, and you can't do this until you've done that, and you can't do that task until you've got this one out of the way, and the reason this one hasn't been done is because this, this, and this are all stacking up, and you've got to deal with the routine.

You've got to deal with the mundane. And an awful lot of ordinary life, we might call it slog, and some of the Christian life is routine.

Some of the Christian life is duty. Some of it is, in a spiritual sense, it's slogging away faithfully at the ordinary things, doing the ordinary little things faithfully, but being encouraged and engaged by the Lord to be strengthened in these things so that we may better enjoy the riches of His grace when it comes to those special sacramental occasions.

So remembrance of His death, sealing of the benefits to true believers, spiritual nourishment and growth, further engagement in and to all the duties that we have when and others, and finally, the bond of, the bond and the pledge of the communion with Him and others.

Now, this word communion, of course, that's what we use to describe the Lord's Supper quite often. We refer to it as the communions, and lots of people do it as Holy Communion, and what have you, because it is this sharing, this communion is literally sharing of what we're experiencing.

[13 : 45] And there's the two-way sharing, the two-way communion, it is the bond and pledge of our communion with Him, with the Lord, the vertical, we might say, relationship, and also with each other.

You know, this is one reason why the Confession of Faith in the Bible, indeed, does not recognize as legitimate any idea of taking the Lord's Supper in secret alone.

You don't take the Lord's Supper in secret alone. You don't reserve the sacrament and take it to somebody in secrecy or even in close privacy. Because it's meant to be a testimony, a token, a bond, a pledge, not only of our communion with the Lord, but of our communion with each other, with the gathered congregation of the Lord's people.

It's not something to be taken alone, just me and God, nobody else. It is a two-way communion, the Lord and His people, and we only belong to Christ, and so far as we belong to His wider body as well.

So what is it? A bond of the pledge and the communion with Him and with others, of course. If we were to look back in 1 Corinthians in chapter 10 again, we would see verses 16 and 17, the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, the sharing, the fellowship, of the blood of Christ?

[15 : 08] The bread which we break, is it not the communion, sharing, fellowship, of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.

So it is a communion that we have with the Lord and with one another. These are all aspects of what is going on when we sit at the Lord's table, when we partake of that bread and wine which is set apart from our ordinary common uses to this holy use and mystery.

And it is a mystery. We won't possibly, you know, we can't sit at the Lord's table when the elements are going to come and say, oh now, what were these five things? There's the remembrance, there's the sealing, oh what was the other one?

Oh no, I'm not going to manage it again. If we focus on one aspect or maybe two and we remember some of these things and we apply them to our hearts, then we know that we are being nourished and fed and strengthened by the Lord through his supper.

It is food inwardly for our souls. We feed inwardly by faith. We feed spiritually on Christ and his benefits.

[16 : 25] That's, we could say in a sense, what it is. There's also, of course, what it is not. And it is important for us to recognize what it is not.

not because we desire to slag off other branches of the church or because we seek to condemn other people. The distinctions that we have to recognize between what the Bible teaches and what it definitely does not teach, whatever any so-called churches might say about it, is not so that we can feel superior to other people or we condemn other people, but it is rather so that the doctrines of Christ are recognized distinctly from the doctrines that men have invented.

And that is basically the truth between true and false religion. True and false religion is about the Lord. It is about God. It is God honoring. It is focused on what he has revealed of himself.

It exalts God. Man-made religion exalts man and what he can do. We've talked about this in previous weeks. And man-made rules, man-made doctrines will conflict with that which the Lord has revealed in his word.

They will either twist them or change them or make them somehow more man-pleasing or man-servant. What the Lord's Supper is not, it is most definitely not a sacrifice there and then on the spot.

[17 : 58] nor is it a re-presenting of Christ's one sacrifice as some branches of the church would teach. They would fall short of saying, oh yes, we offer up the sacrifice again on the altar and we offer it again and we offer it again.

They say, no, no, we're not offering it again. We're just re-presenting it. Re-presenting the one sacrifice of Christ. Not only soul, but they would say that because Jesus says, this is my body, this is my blood, that is what he literally meant.

Now of course we know that Jesus was physically present to his disciples. His body and blood was there in his physical form. It could not physically have been in the bread, in the wine at the same time.

It was contained within his body. He was talking spiritually. He was talking figuratively. The same as when he says, I am the door of the sheepfold. He doesn't mean I have physically become a fence or a gateway.

He was using this illustrative language. So obviously man-made doctrine would say, oh no, this is now God, this piece of bread.

[19 : 13] And that is what is taught in some branches of the church that the entire body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ is contained in a wafer of bread.

And because the soul and divinity of God the Son is there in it, it is, in their eyes, right to be worshipped. So it is held up and worshipped and adored as though this is God.

This is not God. It is that which God himself orders to be set apart to remember his death. It is not God himself.

And, you know, there is no, if this is not an actual sacrifice, if it's not an actual payment being made, which it's not, then there can be no virtue in multiplying the number of times that it is done.

You know, if the Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, which it is, then if somebody partakes rightly on the Lord's Day in question, and they prepare themselves to you and they partake suitably, believing in the faith and so on, then that will be a blessing to them.

[20 : 23] But it won't be ten times the blessing to them if they come in first thing in the morning and they take the bread and wine in a special service and then again, later on in the morning they take it again, then on the side they take it again and then they take it again and by the end of the day they partake in the Lord's Supper ten times.

So that will say, I've got ten times as much holiness in me as I did this morning. No, you don't. In fact, there's probably less because the idea that multiplying the mechanical act is somehow multiplying the blessing or the grace, no, it isn't.

When we partake our rite with due solemnity and faith, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting what he has done for us, receiving with all humility the blessings which are bestowed are bestowed there and there much in one single remembrance as they are in ten multiplied again and again and again.

There is no additional virtue in simply multiplying the act. And this again is another man-made invention that if you can carry out this re-presentation of this so-called sacrifice twenty times then that's twenty times more virtue that you've got than if you'd only done it once.

This is just a man-made invention as is the idea that it can benefit those who have already died as is the idea that somehow there is God contained in this physical bread as is the idea that it is a means of purchasing good in the eyes of God all of these things are man-made inventions.

[22 : 09] They are taking of Christ's words and twas been in a way that anyone could see. The disciples could see. The apostles sitting at the Lord's table could see.

That's not physically him and the bread he's there. They would have known. These doctrines then are not of God. They are not of God's word. They are of men's invention.

And they are of men's invention playing on the ignorance of ordinary men and women of what the Bible actually says. Which is another reason why we must be reading and digesting and immersing ourselves in God's written word that we can know the more clearly what he does say.

And think, yeah, well, he doesn't say this and he doesn't say that. He doesn't say about changing himself into bread and why he doesn't say about the more times you do it, the better it is.

It is not a physical sacrifice. It is not a re-presenting of the sacrifice, but a commemoration of the once and for all sacrifice.

[23 : 18] There is no change in the bread and or wine into the physical flesh of Christ. That is a false doctrine. doctrine, it is an invention of men.

And you'll notice that I am not seeking to single out or criticize names, denominations or people. It is the doctrines of which we are spoken and the distinction in them is not, well, we do it this way, so we must be okay.

They do it that way, so they must be wrong. Remember that there will be a lot of people in a lot of branches of the church who literally don't know any better and when they don't know any better, they will assume that their church is telling them the truth.

And we all have that to an extent where the allegiance to the church of our fathers is exceptionally strong and we will defend whatever they do as far as we possibly can.

We will say they must be right or else they wouldn't do it this way. God must be blessing them because they never have survived. so long. We will have this diehard allegiance which many souls will have.

[24 : 34] In a sense it becomes almost blind allegiance. But there is no denomination or branch of God's church which is perfect or which is above reproach or which ought not to be held up to the scrutiny of what God's word actually teaches.

What does the Bible say? about the Lord's supper and what does it not say? Now you'll find when we look at the gospel of character of Jesus administering the last supper that actually there is very little information about what all the deep spiritual connotations of it.

Paul gives us a little more. Jesus administering of it is very very simple. He breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples. He says this is my body given for you, broken for you.

Takes the cup of wine and says this is my blood. In the New Testament shed for many. It's poured out about it. It's to symbolize his death. It's to symbolize what he was going to go through on the cross and they were to keep on doing it to remember his sacrifice.

sacrifice. This is not something which anyone should see as being something that will further their own point scoring of God.

[25 : 58] This is something we receive in all humility, in all awareness of our great unworthiness. It is because we are sinners that Christ had to die.

It is because we are sinners that if we were going to be redeemed or saved at all then somebody had to pay the price. The other thing that we should recognize is that not everybody, no matter how reformed a denomination or a church or how Bible believing, not everyone who partakes of the Lord's sacraments will be necessarily born again and saved.

Some may mean well but they may fall away. Others may think, well I don't have as much right to do this as anybody else and so they do it and they give a convincing skill and they certainly partake.

It does not follow that everybody who partakes is automatically saved. Now, some ministers and some theologians and Christians disagree over whether or not Judas Iscariot, for example, partook of the Last Supper.

And some would say, no, he took of the Passover but not the Last Supper. No, he didn't eat of that specially. That was just Jesus and his redeemed apostles. That may be so. Personally, and it is, yes, just personally, I would understand the Bible to teach that Judas did partake of the Last Supper.

[27 : 23] I think that is the evidence of Scripture. I think when Jesus said in John's account of the Gospel in chapter 13 of verse 18, I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, and he's quoting Psalm 41 of verse 9, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

The implication there would be that Judas had eaten and drunk with him at that special table and yet had turned against him. And other suggestions elsewhere, you know, later on in the same chapter, it was supper being ended, that Jesus washed their feet, and Judas then went out, and it was night.

He said, now is the Son of Man glorified. He received the salt, he passed the bread, you know, after dipping it in the sauce to him. This would all suggest that he was at the table partaking of the bread and wine, partaking of the last supper.

Others would disagree, they would say, no, that was something quite different. One would have to respect the fact that Christians will disagree on particular interpretations of particular passages. It doesn't mean, oh, one is definitely, oh, the other must be a really bad person.

We all might get it wrong at different times, in different ways. One reason that I think it is a good and wholesome thing that Judas should have partaken and yet still be lost is to demonstrate to us that there is nothing magical in the partaking of the Lord's sacraments.

[28 : 55] Taking the Lord's supper does not get you into heaven. It is not earn you points with the Lord. It is a demonstration, a recognition of what Christ has done for us that we receive with all humility.

If simply partaking of the Lord's supper meant a soul was automatically saved and going to be in heaven, then Judas would be in heaven. And I don't believe the Bible teaches that he is because Jesus says, you know, a little further on in John chapter 17, he says, you know, about his disciples, he says, you know, none of them is lost except the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled.

You know, the Lord had given him these men, they had given them these disciples. While I was in the world, I kept them in thy name. Those that thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost but the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17 at verse 12. This would strongly suggest that Judas is not ingoting. His repentance was simply remorse. He is not actually saved. He is in hell.

He is lost. None of them is lost except the son of perdition. Now that being the case and the evidence suggesting that yes, he sat at the Lord's table, he sat, he partook of the Last Supper, not administered by an orderly commoner garden minister, but by Jesus himself.

[30 : 22] And that still didn't save him, nor did it stop him from his evil purpose of betrayal. There are those who having partaken of the Lord's supper will nonetheless turn against him and betray him.

Judas did. Others have done since then. Others will continue to do so down into the future until the Lord comes back. So there is nothing magical in the partaking of the Lord's sacraments, but there is something deeply spiritual.

There is that which we enter into, of which these things are the outward expression. And they are the outward expression because the Lord has set them apart for this purpose.

And he intended that when his disciples eat bread that has been separated, consecrated in this way, and drink wine that has been separated, consecrated in this way, when they gather solemnly to remember his death and partake of these elements.

They are blessed. They do remember. They are sealed with his benefits. They are nourished and they are enabled to grow more in him.

[31 : 34] They are strengthened and further engaged to all the duties they have to him and to one another. The bond is strengthened, the pledge of their communion with him and with one another.

There is nothing magic about it. There is nothing that will earn them brownie points or give them gold stones and merge out with God simply because they did it. That's it.

It is a sin to neglect it. It is that which we are not. We are not made super saints by doing it, but not ought we to neglect it.

It is that which we ought to approach solemnly and seriously, remembering the reason for which we gather, remembering the death of our Lord, but remembering the life which that death purchased.

This is my body, he said. This is my blood, broken for you, shed for you. Take eat and drink all of it.

[32 : 40] Be part of it. Be part of me because I have died so that you can enter into that. Take care of this.

Take care. Take care of■■■■.