

The Lord's Table

Pasture for the Flock of God · 1 Corinthians 10–11

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The Lord's Table "With Him I love, in spotless white, In glory I shall shine; His blissful presence my delight, His love and glory mine.

"All taint of sin shall be removed, All evil done away; And I shall dwell with God's Beloved, Through God's eternal day."

The Lord's Table The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils -(1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21). For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: 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. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (1 Cor. 11:23-33).

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is an object of divine, unchanging love. Through an accomplished redemption, he is set in righteousness and peace before God; and new and everlasting relationships are formed, the highest and best that God could give. Because we are in Christ, who is in the very glory of God, no position could possibly be higher; and being now children of God {Rom. 8:16, Gal. 3:26},

no relationship could be more elevated and endearing; so that, as to our position, relationships, and blessings in Christ in heavenly places, nothing could exceed what God has made us to be, and given us to enjoy. Moreover, while passing through this barren and thirsty land, where no water is {see Psa. 63:1},

divine grace confers on us the distinguished privilege of welcoming us to the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

to eat the Lord's supper {1 Cor. 11:20}.

The Church of God, while on earth, could have nothing to exceed this collective character of enjoyment and blessing. As we have often said, "It is the best thing out of heaven to be together consciously and intelligently at the Lord's table, and entering into His mind about His supper." Is it not important, then, to gather up from Scripture, as the Holy Spirit may guide, what the Lord's mind is as to this great privilege, which is so joyous and strengthening to the souls of those who can thus enter into it? To every believer Christ is precious. Though now faith sees Him crowned with glory and honor, we remember that He was crowned with thorns; that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; that He died for our sins upon the tree. The believer knows that the death of Christ is the sole basis of peace, the alone foundation of hope, the only way into the unclouded presence of God. He thankfully owns that he owes all his present and eternal blessings to the blood of the cross. He thinks of the mighty work of creation, and knows that all was

brought into existence by the word of God; but, when he considers the stupendous and triumphant work of redemption, he is convinced that it could have been accomplished by nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God. No marvel then that the death of Jesus should be of such unspeakable interest to every believer, and that it is so often brought before us in the volume of eternal truth. In looking carefully over the Scriptures we have just read, we find the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

spoken of in the tenth chapter (the only place in Scripture where it occurs), and the disorderly conduct of the Corinthians brought out the remarks of the apostle on the Lord's Supper in the eleventh chapter. The former gives us more the fellowship element, while the latter sets forth more of the individual exercise of soul, and condition suited to such an occasion. The reason, no doubt, why this portion of the eleventh chapter is more frequently read at such times than the verses of the tenth chapter, is because so few seem intelligently and heartily to enter into the fellowship character of it. But it is our superlative happiness, to be consciously enjoying the communion of saints at the Lord's table, while remembering Him, and showing His death till He come. Though both portions of Scripture refer to the same meeting of the saints, we cannot fail to observe some striking differences between them. The order of the chapters too must not be unnoticed, because the association or fellowship character of the Lord's table, in separation from the tables of demons, must be entered into before the soul can be rightly exercised according to the eleventh chapter. Then in the tenth chapter the cup is mentioned first. We have the cup of blessing which we bless}

before the bread which we break {1 Cor. 10:16}.

Now, whatever other reasons there may be for this change, it is clear, if Christian fellowship is here treated of, that its only basis can be found in that which brings us on a common level before

God in peace and blessing. This has been accomplished by the blood of Christ. Here we all find a true ground of communion, both spiritual and eternal. We bless together as with one soul. We drink of the same cup. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? {1

Cor. 10:16}

Apart from that precious blood there could be no communion; but by it a solid and everlasting basis has been laid, and we express the true ground of communion in blessing together and drinking together the same cup. Though when thus assembled we may all have had different histories and experiences, yet now, in virtue of the all-cleansing power of the blood shed for many, we are on one common ground of peace and thanksgiving. It is also emphatically a time of praise; for it is the cup of blessing which we bless.

Again, in the tenth chapter, instead of the body and blood of the Lord {1 Cor. 11:27},
as in the eleventh chapter, we have the blood of (the) Christ,
and the body of (the) Christ {1 Cor. 10:16}.

This change also has its significance. In the tenth chapter, the subjects being communion and thanksgiving at the Lord's table, the grace of God is very especially brought before us in the work of Christ, and membership of the body of Christ. Hence we read, It is Christ that died, &c. (Rom. 8:34); made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

It is also as the Christ that He is given to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body (Eph. 1:20, 23).

The title of Lord brings in more the idea of dignity and authority; that of Christ the rich and abundant grace of God, in meeting us in our deepest need as sinners by His death, and giving acceptance and blessing in Him who is Head of the body, now in the heavenly places. What love! And further, the communion of saints expressed at the Lord's table is also characterized as being in the membership of "one body," as formed and energized by "one Spirit." In breaking the same bread, and eating of the same loaf, we not only have communion together in feeding by faith upon His body given for us, but we also, in partaking of the same loaf, express our oneness in the (mystical) body. Hence we read, not only the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

but it is added, For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one (bread) loaf {1 Cor. 10:17}.

Breaking and eating of the same loaf is the expression of our oneness in the mystical body of Christ. And the membership of one body on earth in union with the Head in heaven, formed by the Holy Ghost come down, being an essential doctrine of Christianity, how could it have been possible for the Lord's table to have been instituted on earth on any other ground? To the thoughtful believer it commends itself at once. It may, however, make manifest to some, how little the conscience has been up to the truth of the Lord's table, both as to its associations and what

it expresses. Scripture does not speak of "members of a church," or of "the minister of a church," or of "administering the Lord's Supper"; nor could such expressions have been current among Christians, if the membership of Christ's body, the varied gifts of the Head, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the communion character of the Lord's table had been truly recognized. Scripture then does teach us

about the Lord's table; not the Lord's tables; for being instituted for the remembrance of Himself, on the ground of the blood once shed, for the communion of saints, and for the expression of the membership of one body, however many companies there may be, and however geographically separated, still, to faith, each and all thus gathered are consciously sitting at the Lord's table, owning too the same indwelling Spirit who has united all to Christ the Head, and to each other in Him. Saints cannot go far wrong collectively when really holding the Head. It is the death of Christ which so especially engages us when gathered to the Lord at His table. We remember Him. We think of Him as He was. We heartily respond to His loving request, This do in remembrance 1 Cor. 11:24, 25}.

of

ME

{Luke

22:19,

It is the Lord Himself, who died for us, that now occupies our hearts. We shew or announce His death. As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

What wonderful words -- "THE LORD'S DEATH"! Let us ponder them well. The death of Him who is Lord of all, and in the highest place of authority and power! What a marvel of divine grace! What a privilege too, that now, while in our mortal bodies, we are to announce the Lord's death! Not that in so doing we are establishing anything on earth; on the contrary, we thus remember Him as those who are expecting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It is therefore said -As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

In the Lord's Supper, then, we look back upon Jesus, the Son of man, lifted up, and are occupied with His death. It is clearly this for which the Holy Ghost gathers us together. While taken up with Himself -- "ME" -- it is doing that, in thus remembering Him, which especially announces His death. Our adorable Lord well knew the need of our souls in thus having Him, who poured out His soul unto death for us, in constant remembrance -- in calling to mind this outflow of divine, perfect love, this basis of eternal peace, during the whole period of His absence. What praise becomes us! It is, however, important to notice that, because of the peculiar calling, formation, and relationships of the body, the Church -- which was not set up till Pentecost, nor known until revealed to Paul -- it needed a special revelation from the Lord to fully declare to us His mind concerning His supper. For while all know it was instituted by the Lord Himself, as recorded in the gospels, yet there we observe that it came in after the Passover, and had a prospect kingdom-wise. The Jewish order of things not being at that time completely set aside, (for after Pentecost Peter preached that Messiah would come, and set up the kingdom, if the nation repented, Acts 3:19,) our Lord at the supper referred to the kingdom in hope, the period of His setting

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up millennial blessing on the earth, saying, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

But we are taught to shew the Lord's death till He come. Observe here, not only that the supper was instituted after the Passover, but that our Lord partook of the passover with them. He said, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer (Luke 22:15).

It was His service to fulfil all righteousness. Whereas at the supper, though profoundly and perfectly entering into its character in all its marvelous blessing to us, so that He gave thanks, yet instead of eating, He gave it to His disciples to eat. He said, Take, eat {1 Cor. 11:24};

and so we eat, as knowing, He will come from heaven to take us to Himself. This needed a special revelation from the ascended Lord, to set us in the proper posture of expectancy at His table. We therefore read that the apostle Paul informed the assembly at Corinth that he had received the instruction then needed by the Church of God. He said, I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, after He had supped

(or, In like manner also the cup, after having supped), saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Thus far the apostolic announcement is almost a narration of what took place when the Lord instituted His supper; only the supper is separated from the Passover, which preceded it, and brought out in its own proper distinctness. What follows, however, is entirely new, and remarkably suited to the special calling of the Church of God. For it is not the kingdom to be set up on earth which is given as the boundary for keeping the supper on earth; but it is the Lord's coming for us, when we shall be changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air. The inspired apostle therefore added, For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

Living as we are between the cross and the glory -- Christ crucified and Christ coming -- we look back on Calvary, and remember Him; we look up by faith into heaven, and see Him, and know that we are in Him, and He in us; and we look forward to His coming, to take us to glory with Him. As therefore this hope is peculiar to the Church of God, as terminating her sojourn here, we can easily understand why we are instructed that we are to eat the Lord's Supper, and shew His death, not till the kingdom come, but till He come; for, from other Scriptures, we know that His coming for us will be before He comes out of heaven in power and great glory to establish His kingdom. It is our happy privilege therefore, thus to remember the Lord till He come.

The vital point in the Lord's Supper is discerning the Lord's body, which we do by the exercise of faith. To eat the bread and drink of the cup as a mere formal routine is displeasing to the Lord. It is only a piece of lifeless ritualism, a kind of Christianity without Christ, alas! so fashionable and prevailing at

the present time. It was this which brought such severe discipline from the Lord on so many in the Church at Corinth. For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

They were professing to eat the Lord's Supper, but were forgetful of the Lord -not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29, 30).

A more solemn delinquency perhaps can scarcely be practiced, and could not fail to call for the Lord's discipline. It seemed common at Corinth, for the Lord's all-seeing eye detected it in many. Nor could it in any place be unnoticed by Him, with whatever outward propriety, and apparent sanctity, it might be covered. At Corinth some were sickly, others were weak, and others removed by death, for the Lord's governmental discipline was exercised on many. For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Cor. 11:30).

Professing then to take the Lord's Supper, and not when taking the bread and wine to discern the Lord's body, is to eat and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, and to bring damnation (condemnation, or judgment), for such are guilty (not of, but) in respect of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). They do not regard it as a sacrifice. The Lord's Supper is also to be eaten with self-examination. Not self-examination to see whether we are good enough, prepared enough, and the like, for it is not a question as to fitness for eating or not; but having examined ourselves, we are to eat. That is, we are not to take the Lord's Supper in a careless state of mind, but to come to it in a condition of soul suited to the Lord's presence. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup (1 Cor. 11:28).

We are to approach the supper of the Lord with self-examination and self-judgment, that not a spot of unjudged evil may be allowed on us, the Holy Spirit be not grieved, and our Lord well pleased; for it is the Lord's presence, the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of our Lord, in the perfectness of divine love, which engage us on this occasion. But some may say, I dare not examine myself; if I did, I should make such appalling discoveries that I could not go to the Lord's table, because I should find myself so unfit. This, however, is not what we find here. It is a divine direction to examine himself, and so let him eat;

that is, that true self-examination as to life and walk answers to that state of soul which suits the Lord on such an occasion. No doubt, when we are in the searching light of God's most holy presence in the exercise of self-examination, much will be detected which we deplore before the Lord; but are we to stay away from His supper on this account? Certainly not. But having judged ourselves, and condemned, as in His sight, every thing we have discovered contrary to His mind we are to eat -So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Therefore these precious words are added, For if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:28, 31).

We should partake of the Lord's Supper then, not in a state of mere formality or carelessness, but with all solemnity, as having examined and judged ourselves, and therefore not conscious of associating any uncleanness with His presence; for how otherwise could we be enjoying the Lord and

His work? If the head of a well-ordered household would have each member approach the family table with order and cleanliness, and would feel that disrespect was cast upon him by one taking his seat there bespattered with spots of defilement and carelessly attired, could our adorable Lord be less sensitive as to the state of soul with which we surround His table? Could it be a matter of indifference to Him whether or not we appeared there with unjudged evil? Most certainly not, as the Scripture before us clearly shows; yet how blessed is the divine assurance, that if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

On the other hand, because the Lord loves us, and we are His own, He must govern and discipline. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten {Rev. 3:19}.

The two lines of truth, that the Lord's people are objects of His love, and also of His government, run like parallel lines all through Scripture; nor can His ways with us be understood, unless these two lines are clearly seen. If then there be the absence of self-judgment, it will call for the Lord's governmental-judgment, or it may be the judgment of the assembly, for these three orders of judgment are found in this epistle. If the Lord's governmental interference be called for, He must judge according to His own perfect wisdom and faithfulness; but, as we have seen, this would not be needed if we judge ourselves; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).

The present sphere of the Lord's judgment is the house of God, by-and-by it will be the world. Those who are not dealt with governmentally now, will be condemned with the world then. Let us never forget that our present blessing, as well as the Lord's glory, are connected with the state of soul in which we are found at the Lord's table. Our title to be there is, that we are redeemed by Christ; our blessing when there is, that our state is according to Christ, and that we are occupied with Him. Let us then, dear fellow-Christians, have it warmly impressed upon our hearts, firstly, that there is such a precious reality as the Lord's table, which is essentially characterized by communion, and the expression of one body in the cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break. Secondly, that in eating the Lord's Supper, we remember HIM, shew the Lord's death, which He would have continued "till He come." Thirdly, that the vital characteristic of being thus occupied is discerning the Lord's body. Without this, it is eating and drinking unworthily {1 Cor. 11:29}

-- a dead observance -- which may bring forth the Lord's solemn discipline. Fourthly, that the Lord looks for a condition of soul in us suited to such a happy and holy privilege, therefore should it be approached with self-examination, and, if needful, selfjudgment. When this is absent, He must chasten because He

loves, and because He finds associated with His name and table that which is dishonoring to Him, and unprofitable to us. If in 1 Cor. 10 separation from the idol's temple, and from eating of the tables of demons, are pointed out as necessitated on account of the divine character of fellowship in the membership of the one body which the Lord's table sets forth, we have also in the eleventh chapter the individual exercises, condition of soul, and discipline which suit the partaking of the Lord's Supper. It

is the former line of instruction that has been so lost sight of, though the latter is always of all-importance. Many pious souls no doubt know what it is as individuals to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of the Lord, and to enjoy perhaps the supper of the Lord, who have little idea of the comprehensive import and fellowship character set forth by the cup and the loaf. In this they come short of the Lord's mind. Self likes individuality, even in a pious path, for it suits self-love and gratifies nature. But while the Lord holds each saint individually accountable, and has set each in personal dependence on, and responsibility to, Himself, yet He has established a fellowship of saints divine in its character, for which He has wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and for which also we are accountable to Him. While individually the objects of His love and care, we are also members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}, and members one of another {Rom. 12:5}.

Our present profit and blessing are surely in carrying out the Lord's mind in all things. We must not close our eyes to the spurious imitations and corruptions of the truth which surround us. May the Lord keep us faithful to Himself! The practical question for each of our souls is, Do I recognize, according to Scripture, the Lord's table? and am I, when there, entering into the Lord's mind about it? Characterized as His table is by the communion of the blood of Christ, and the communion of the body of Christ, how necessarily it excludes all who do not believe in Him to the saving of the soul! How distinctly also the divine character of fellowship in the membership of "one body," of which Christ is Head, separates us from every other fellowship, and leaves no room for any official administration of it! Failure there has been and may be; but when the soul has the sense of being at the Lord's table, how can anything dishonoring to Him be excused or tolerated? And when the divine membership of the body of Christ is realized, how could any other membership be allowed? Impossible. And this communion is holy and real. The bread (not that is administered, but) which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}.

When we are intelligently sitting at the Lord's table, breaking and eating the same loaf, and drinking of the same cup, we enjoy communion of saints in no less a circle than the membership of one body of which Christ is Head, so that every saint in Christ Jesus is an object of our hearts affections, and interests. This is not sectarianism; it is exactly the reverse, because it embraces all saints. The ground is not narrower than the membership of the "one body," nor can it in faithfulness to Christ be wider. Oh for constant and unfeigned subjection to the Lord's will!