

A Question for Communicants

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately explains that the Lord's Supper is a profound memorial, exhibition, and communion that calls believers to remember Christ's sacrifice, partake in spiritual fellowship with Him, and unite as one body in faith.

Scripture: Exodus 12:26, John 15:13, 1 Corinthians 11:24-26, Romans 8:35

Topics: "Lord's Supper", "Communion", "Christ's Sacrifice"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the deep spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper, emphasizing its role as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, an exhibition of His death, and a communion that unites believers with Christ and one another. Spurgeon challenges believers to understand and cherish this sacred ordinance, encouraging a heartfelt remembrance and anticipation of Christ's return. His passionate teaching calls the church to a living faith that is both knowledgeable and deeply relational.

Transcript

"What do you mean by this service?" Exodus 12:26.

IN a spiritual religion everything must be understood. That which is not spiritual, but ritualistic, contents itself with the outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation there was a very strong tendency in that direction, but it was kept in check to some extent. Under the Christian faith this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We must know the meaning of what we do, otherwise we are not profited. We do not believe in the faith of the man who was asked what he believed and replied that he believed what the church believed. "But what does the church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "Well, but what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." He would not explain himself any further. We look upon such expressions as the talk of ignorance and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes and can give a reason for the hope that is in her meekness and fear.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, "What do you mean by this service?" Children should be encouraged to ask such gracious questions now. I am afraid they are not prompted to do so as they used to be in Puritan times. After the sermon always came the catechizing of the children when they were at home—and every father was bound to be attentive to the sermon—because he had to ask the boys and girls in the evening what they had heard. The children were more attentive, then, than now, because they had to be prepared to answer any questions of their parents. Cultivate in your children a desire to understand everything connected with

our holy faith!

In this chapter, from which I culled my text, the parents are taught how to answer their children. If the parent is ignorant, a question from his child is inconvenient. He finds his ignorance exposed and he, perhaps, is vexed with the child who has been the innocent means of unveiling him to himself. Be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the Gospel mean. Explain Baptism to them, explain the Lord's Supper to them and above all, explain the Gospel—and let them know, as far as words can make it plain, what is that great mystery whereby we are saved, whereby sin is forgiven, and we are made the children of God.

I thought it would be profitable, if God gave me strength for the exercise, very briefly to answer the question supposed to be put by an intelligent youth, "What do you mean by this service?"—this service that is called, by some people, "Holy Communion." Which is sometimes called the "Eucharist." And among us is called, "the Lord's Supper," or, "the breaking of bread." What does it mean?

It means many things, but chiefly five, of which I will now speak.

I. This supper is, first of all, A MEMORIAL.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. You may erect a bronze column, or you may engrave a record of it upon brass in the church. Eventually the column will get sold for old bronze and somebody will steal the brass plates from the church—and the memorial will disappear. You may write it upon marble if you please, but in our climate, at any rate, the inscription is very apt to be obliterated and the old stones, though they last long, may, after a time, be as dumb as the treasures of Nineveh and Egypt were for centuries. These monuments did preserve the records, but they were hidden under the sand, or buried beneath the ruins of cities. And though they now have a tongue and are speaking forcibly, yet whatever had been entrusted to them would have been forgotten while they were lying under the sand of the desert, or in the debris of the palaces of Koyunjik. There are other

ways of preserving memorials, such as writing in books, but books can be lost. Many valuable works of the ancients have entirely ceased and no copies of them can be found. Some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament which were not inspired books, but still were books which we should greatly value, have quite passed out of existence.

It is found that upon the whole, one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it which shall be frequently performed so as to keep the fact in memory. I suppose that Absalom will never be forgotten. He built himself a pillar in the king's dale—he knew his own infamous history and he thought it might be forgotten. No one would care to remember it, so he built himself a monument. And there it stands—or what is reputed to be that monument, to this day—and every Arab who passes by the spot throws a stone at it. Absalom will better be remembered by the ceremony of throwing stones at his tomb than by any record in marble!

To turn your thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a surer and better method of keeping the death of Christ in mind than of meeting together, as we shall do tonight, for the breaking of bread and the pouring out of the juice of the vine in memory of His death. Other facts may be forgotten—this one can never be. Tonight and every first day of the week, in 10,000 places of worship, Believers meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's Cross and passion, His

precious death and burial. Those great facts can never pass out of mind. Jesus said to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of Me." In obeying His command, you are doing what is most effectual in keeping your Lord in remembrance. As I preach, tonight, having no sort of reliance upon my own words, I want you to practice them as I go along. Then you will be like the woman who said that when she heard a sermon about light weights and short measures, though she forgot what the preacher said, when she got home, she remembered to burn her bushel, which was short. So, if you can just practice the sermon as you hear it, it will be well.

Remember, then, that you come to this Table tonight to remember an absent Friend. Jesus has gone away. He who loved us better than any other ever loved us, has left us for a while. We sometimes take little parting gifts from friends, and they say to us—

"When this you see Remember me.

Probably, almost everybody here has, at some time or other, had certain tokens of remembrance by which they might be reminded of some dear one who is far away across the seas—out of sight—but not out of mind. You come to the Communion Table, then, to remember your absent Friend.

You come, also, chiefly to remember His great deed of love. This supper is a memorial of what Jesus did for you when He was on the earth. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down His life for you—remember that tonight. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"—dwell on that fact. Let these words wake the echoes in your hearts, "Gethsemane!" "Gabbatha!" "Golgotha!" Can you forget all that Jesus suffered there on your behalf? If you have let these things slip in any degree from your heart's affections, come and write them down again! Come to the Table and there celebrate the memorial of His love, wounds, agonies and death for you—

"In memory of the Sa vior's love,

We keep the sacred feast,

Where every humble contrite heart

Is made a welcome guest.

By faith we take the bread of life,

With which our souls are fed.

And cup, in token of His blood

That was for sinners shed.'

You are also called upon to remember a dear Friend who, although He has gone away, has gone about your business. It was expedient for you that He should go away. He is doing you more good where He has gone than He could have done if He stayed here. He is interceding for you tonight. Your business would miscarry were it not for Him—within the veil that hides Him from you, He is pleading for you. His power, His dignity, His merit are all freely being employed for you. He is pleading the causes of your soul. Can you, will you, forget Him? Will you not now forget everything else and indulge the sweet memory of your faithful Lover, your dear Husband who is married to you in ties of everlasting wedlock? Come, I pray you, keep the memorial of this dear Friend!

And you have to remember a Friend who will return very soon. He only tells you to do this till He comes. He is coming back to us. His own words are, "Behold, I come quickly!" That is not quite the meaning of what He said—it was, "Behold, I am coming quickly!" He is on His way! His chariot is hurrying towards us. The axles of the wheels are hot with speed. He is coming as fast as He can. The long-suffering of God delays Him till sinners are brought in—till the full number of His elect shall be accomplished—but He is not delaying! He is not lingering! He is not slack, as some men count slackness. He is coming quickly. Will you not remember Him? Soon will His hand be on the door. Soon for you, at any rate, He may cry, "Arise, My love, My dove, My fair one, and come away." And soon He may be here among us and then we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

I charge my own heart to remember my dear Lord, tonight, and I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, let not the feebleness of my reminder deprive you, now, of the happiness of thinking much of Christ your Lord! Sit still and let all other thoughts be gone—think only of Him who loved you and died for you. Let your thoughts go back to Calvary, as you sing, in mournful accents—

"O sacred head once wounded,

With grief and pain weighed down,

How scornfully surrounded

With thorns, Your only crown!

How pale are You with anguish,

With sore abuse and scorn!

How does that Visage languish,

Which once was bright as morn!" Oh, eyes full of tears! Oh, shoulders once beaten with the gory lash! Oh, hands once nailed to the cruel Cross! Oh, feet once fastened to the bitter tree! Soon shall we behold the Christ who loved us and died for us. Therefore let us observe this sacred feast in remembrance of Him.

II. But I must be more brief on my second point. The second meaning of the Lord's Supper is that it is AN EXHIBITION. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you show the Lord's death till He comes." We are helped to remember it by the type, the emblem, the metaphor which is supplied to us by this supper. How is that? Is there any likeness to the death of Christ in this supper? I answer, there is a great likeness.

There is His broken body, represented by the bread which is broken and intended for use. His dear body was broken, marred, sadly marred, given over to the hands of death, laid in the sepulcher, wrapped about with fine linen, left there, as His enemies thought, never to rise again. In that broken bread, broken that even believing children may eat their morsel, you see Christ's body given up for His people's sake. But there stands a cup. It is full of the red juice of the grape. What does it mean? He, Himself, shall explain it—"This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." Now, the shedding of blood is the great token of death. One would not long talk of killing without speaking of shedding blood. In fact, bloodshed usually means dying by a violent death, and so did Jesus die. They pierced His hands and His feet. A soldier thrust his lance into His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. That stream of blood was the token that He really was dead. He has poured out from His veins His precious life to

purchase His redeemed! The broken bread, the cluster pressed into the cup and leaving nothing but its blood-red juice—these two things symbolize Christ's death.

But, most of all, this is an exhibition of the two things separate—the bread and the cup. We have heard of some mixing the bread with the wine—that is not the Lord's Supper! We have heard of others partaking of the wafer, as they call it, and leaving the cup—this is not taking the Lord's Supper! They must be both there—the bread here, the wine cup there—because the separation of the blood from the flesh is the surest token of death! "The blood is the life thereof and if the blood is drained away, there is death. Therefore the blood is represented by the cup—and the flesh is represented by the bread. These two, separated, are the great token and emblem of Christ's death.

We show, display, exhibit, symbolize the death of our Lord at this Table in this fashion—we partake of both symbols—eating of the bread, drinking of the cup, the whole ministering to the support of our life. At this Table we say to all of you who do not know Christ—Christ's death is our life—and the remembrance of Christ's death is the food of our life! If any of you are spectators of the ordinance, this is the meaning of our little acted sermon—Christ has died. Christ's death is the support of our faith, the food of our souls, in token whereof we take this bread and this cup, and eat and drink. So this supper is a showing forth of Christ's death. How many here can say that Christ's death is their life? How

many of you can say that you feed upon Him? Dear Friends, you must not come to the Table unless you can say it. But if you can, come and welcome! But if you cannot, oh, may the Lord teach you the lesson that is so necessary, the lesson that is so blessed, when it is once learned—that Christ on the Cross is the one hope of eternal glory!

You have thus had two meanings of the Lord's Supper. First—it is a memorial. And next—it is an exhibition.

III. The Lord's Supper is, next, A COMMUNION. We must have this brought out prominently, or we shall miss a great deal. We are at the Lord's Table—we eat of His bread, we drink out of His cup. This betokens friendship. When, in the East, a man has eaten of an Arab's salt, he is from that time under his protecting care. And he who has spiritually eaten of Christ's bread has come under Christ's protection—Christ will take care of Him. All feuds are ended. An eternal peace is established between the two. It was a tender parable in which Nathan spoke of a man who had a little ewe lamb which did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom. This is your privilege—to lie in Christ's bosom, to drink out of His cup and to eat of His bread! This is a very sweet fellowship! Enjoy it tonight to the fullest.

We go further than that, for we not only eat of His bread, but symbolically we feast upon Him. His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! Can I really feed upon Christ? Really, yes! Carnally, no! There is no such thing as the carnal eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood—that were a horrible thing! That were to make a man a cannibal! But the spiritual feeding upon the Incarnate God—this is what we mean. He gives us His flesh to eat and we thus enter into a fellowship of the most intense and mysterious kind—not merely eating with Him, but eating Him—not merely receiving from Him, but receiving Him, Himself, to be the life of our hearts! May you get to that point tonight! I believe in the real Presence of Christ, but I do not believe in the carnal presence of the Roman Catholic. I believe in the real presence of the Believer, but that reality is none the less real because it is spiritual—and only spiritual men can discern it!

Now, Beloved, if we really come in the right spirit to this Table, when we have eaten the bread, it becomes part of us. When the wine is sipped, the juice of the grape enters into our constitution—we cannot separate it from ourselves. Such is our fellowship with Christ. He is one with us and we are one with Him. "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" We are one with Christ, partners with Him. All that He has is ours—all that we have is His. He gives Himself to us—we yield ourselves to Him. It is Christ and Co., only the little, "Co.," drops its name to be swallowed up in Him who is All in All! That is the meaning of the bread and the cup. We take Christ into ourselves, as He has taken us up into His greater Self.

But communion also means that we are one with each other. I wish that you would catch that thought. I am afraid there are some members of the Church, here, who have never realized their union with all the rest of the members. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone, members, one of another." One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are Brethren. There should be an intimate feeling of fellowship, a readiness to help and love one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep!

I cannot shake off from myself the idea that this makes up a large part of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, the communion of saints with each other as well as the communion of the saints with Christ. May we enjoy it tonight! For my part, I like to feel, when I come to the Table, that I am going to have communion, not only with this Church, large as it is, not merely with the members of one denomination, (I wish there were no denominations), not merely with the company of one body of Christians—would to God, there were but one body of Christians throughout the world!—but freely inviting all who belong to any part of the visible Church! I delight to think that at this Table, tonight, I shall have fellowship with the Brothers and Sisters in the United States, of all names, and sorts, and ages, and ranks. There cannot be two churches of Christ. There is but one Church, one Head and one body. Though there are some very naughty children in the Lord's family, they must not be kept without their supper—there is some other way of chastening them! And as long as there is true living communion between one Christian and another, where God has given the thing signified, I dare not keep back the sign. If He gives them to have fellowship with Christ, who am I that shall say, "You shall have not fellowship with Him"? I dare not say it!

The meaning of this Supper, then, is communion.

IV. But a fourth meaning of the Lord's Supper is A COVENANTING. Our Lord said to His disciples, "This cup is the new testament, or Covenant, in My blood." We do well to sing—

"Your body broken for my sake,

My bread from Heaven shall be; Your testamental cup I take, And thus remember Thee.'

When we come to the Lord's Table, we must be careful that we there take Christ to be our God in Covenant. We take the one living God forever and ever. He gives Himself to us and we take Him, and we declare, "This God is our God forever and ever. He shall be our Guide even unto death." Do you understand that Covenant relationship, everyone of you? Do you know what you are doing when you take the piece of bread and eat it—and take the cup and drink of it? If you are truly a Believer in Christ, God is in Covenant with you through the body and the blood of Christ—and you recognize that blessed Truth of God—and take Him to be your God.

Now, the Covenant runs thus, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." When, therefore, we come to this covenanting Table, we agree that we will be the Lord's people—therefore, not the devil's, not

the world's, not our own— but the Lord's. When the Lord's people are chastened, we expect to be chastened with them. When the Lord's people are persecuted, we expect to be persecuted with them. We must take them for better or for worse, to have and to hold, and death, itself, must not part us from the Lord's people. That is the meaning of coming to this Table—recognizing that between you and God there is an agreement made that must not be broken, a Covenant ordered in all things and sure by which God becomes yours and you become His—so that you are forever to be one of those that belong wholly to Him.

Here, at the Communion Table, God, the Covenant God, seals His love to us. "Come here, My child," says the Lord, "I love you and I gave Myself for you, in token, whereof, put this bread into your mouth, to remind you of how I gave Myself for you. I love you so that you are Mine. I have called you by My name, in token, whereof, I remind you that I bought you with My precious blood. Therefore, let that sip of the juice of the vine go into your body to remind you that by My precious blood, which was shed for many, I have redeemed you from going down into the Pit." There are seals at that Table, new seals of the Covenant, new tokens, new love gifts from the Lord, to remind you of what He has done for you!

And you are to come here, tonight, to testify anew your love to God. Here you say, "My Master, let me eat with You." If any of you have lost your first love and have grown spiritually cold, the Savior stands at the door and knocks—and He says, "Open to Me"—and He also says that if we open to Him, He will come in and sup with us, and we with Him. He said that to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, the Church which was neither cold nor hot, which He threatened to spew out of His mouth. If you are only fit to make Christ sick, yet if you will open the door to Him, He will come and feast with you tonight—and all shall be well with you! He testifies His love to you. Come and testify yours to Him tonight. That is the meaning of this bread and this cup. Your covenant with death is broken, your agreement with Hell is annulled! And now you are in Covenant with God and He is in Covenant with you—even in an everlasting Covenant which shall never be broken!

V. Lastly, and very briefly, this supper signifies A THANKSGIVING. It is often called, by friends who love hard words, the "Eucharist." We have some friends who always carry a gold pencil, on purpose, to put down every word that nobody understands, that they may use it next Sunday in their sermon. Such people call the Lord's Supper the "Eucharist," which signifies "the giving of thanks." This is the thanksgiving service of the Church of God. It ought to be celebrated every Lord's Day. Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week and we ought to give thanks every time we celebrate His Resurrection. Certainly we should do so when we celebrate His death! What are we going to do tonight by way of thanksgiving?

Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral! The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's Supper takes its place with higher joys! We come to this feast to testify our joy in Christ. There is bread, but there is also wine upon the table. This is to show that it is a festival for joy and delight. And you cannot praise Christ better and give thanks to Him better than by rejoicing in Him! Praise Him by your grateful joy! I think that we should always come to the Lord's Table with a feeling of deep reverence, but that reverence should never tend to bondage. We want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no! Come, children! Come, beloved ones of the Lord! Come, table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival He has prepared and let your joy be full of thanksgiving!

We come to the Table, next, actually to praise the Lord for giving Christ to us. When our Lord broke the bread, He gave thanks. So shall we tonight. Come, Beloved, to thankfully praise the Father for the gift of Christ. And as you take the bread into your mouth, say in your heart, "Bless the Lord!" And as you drink of the cup, say in your spirit, "Blessed be His holy name! Blessed be the Father for His eternal love to us! Blessed be Jesus for His love which has saved us to know all these precious things!"

One way in which we show our thanks to Christ is that we receive with gratitude the emblems of His death. Each one who communes with us will receive the bread and eat it, and take the cup and drink it. We do not hold it up and look at it. We do not kneel down and pay it homage—we receive it. We have done so now these many years. How long is it since we began this holy feast? Well, with some of us, it is over 40 years since our first communion, and we do not need any better food. We desire to keep in memory the same Christ, to feed upon the same doctrine of the Incarnation and atoning Sacrifice. And if we should be spared, Beloved, another 40 years, which is far from likely, we shall have a sweeter tooth for Christ even than we have now! He will be more dear to us, more precious, more delightful, even, than He is tonight! So we come to the Table to show our gratitude by receiving and receiving again.

Let me whisper in your ears, when this communion is over and you shall leave this Table, "Pray, Beloved, that you may go away in the same spirit as your Lord and Master did when, after rising from supper, He went out to the Garden, not there to have a sweet hour of lonely communion with God, but there to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! He went there to be arrested, to be hurried off to the bar of Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, and the rest of them. He went there, in fact to die! But He went away singing." So I want you to go away from this communion singing praises to God!

As my dear Brother said in prayer, you must have your Gethsemanes, your Golgothas—but I want you to go away from this Table singing! Whatever comes, high or low, bright or dark, Heaven or another age in this dark wilderness, Brothers and Sisters, let us sing! We often say, "Let us pray," but tonight, at the Table, I say, "Let us sing!" Let us sing unto the Lord because of His great gift to us, which we, tonight, remember, and set forth, and commune with, and Covenant with! Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live, for we can never sufficiently praise Him for all that He has done for us—

"We'll praise our risen Lord,

While at His feet we sit!

His griefs a hallowed theme afford

For sweetest music fit."

Thus I have explained all about the Lord's Supper. Do you know anything about it? Some of you are going away. You are going away! Yes, and the day shall come when you will not have anywhere to go! When the great marriage supper is spread and the feast of the gracious shall be held, and the whole universe shall be gathered, oh, where will you go? You will not be allowed to linger at the door, neither will you go home to wait till others shall return from the festival. You must be driven from God's Presence if you come not by faith in Christ to that great feast! The fiery swords of the angel guards shall be unsheathed and they shall pursue you through the blackness of eternal darkness, down to infinite despair! The Lord have mercy upon you, tonight, that He may have mercy upon you in that day, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON MATTHEW 26:26-30 and 1 CORINTHIANS 11:22-34.

We will read, first, Matthew's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 26:26. And as they were eating. In the middle of the Paschal Feast our Lord instituted the sacred festival which was always afterwards to be known as, "the Lord's Supper." The one ordinance was made to melt gradually into the other—"as they were eating."

26. Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is My body. "This represents My body." He could not possibly have meant that the bread was His body, for there was His body sitting at the table, whole and entire! They would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood Him literally! But they did not do so any more than when Christ said, "I am the door," or, "I am the Good Shepherd."

27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it. "Everyone of you." Was this the Lord's Supper? Yes. What say the Romanists about it? Why, that the people may not drink the cup! Yet our Savior said to His disciples, "Drink you all of it."

28. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Now they were to have a perpetual pledge of the pardon of sin, in the cup, which was the emblem of Christ's blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins."

29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom. Jesus took the Nazarite vow to drink no more, to partake no more of the fruit of the vine, till He should meet us again in His Father's Kingdom. He has pledged us once and for all in that cup, and now He abstains until He meets us again. Thus He looks forward to a glorious meeting, but He bids us take the cup and thus remember Him until He comes.

30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. To His last great battle the Champion goes singing, attended by feeble followers who could not protect Him, but who could sing with Him! I think He must have led the tune—His disciples were too sorrowful to sing until His clear voice started the Hallelujah Psalms—but they joined Him in the holy exercise, for, "they," as well as their Lord sang the hymn. When you are about to face a trial, offer a prayer. But, if you can, also sing a hymn! It will show great faith if, before you enter into the burning fiery furnace, you can sing Psalms unto the Lord who redeems His people!

Now let us read Paul's version of this same matter.

1 Corinthians 11:20, 21. When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating everyone takes before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk. These Corinthians had fallen into a very strange state. I do not think that any Baptist Church that I have ever known of has acted in this fashion, but when churches have no ministers—when there is an open ministry where everybody talks and nobody listens—they fall into a strange condition, especially into divisions and heart-breaking strifes. It was so in the case of this Church at Corinth. Here everybody brought his own provision and some ate to the full, while others had not enough—and they thought that they were observing "the Lord's Supper!"

22. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? There is your proper place if you need a meal. Go home and eat and drink! Do not come to the sanctuary for such a purpose—"Have you not houses to eat and to drink in?"

22, 23. Or despise you the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not! For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you. He had received it by a special Revelation. Poor Paul was brought in late and he was like one born out of due time. He had not been present in the upper room with Christ at the first famous breaking of bread, so the Lord came and gave Him a special Revelation concerning this sacred feast, so that, whenever he spoke or wrote to any of the Churches about the Lord's Supper, he could say, "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you."

23, 24. That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. The Lord's Supper is a simple service of remembrance. Nothing is said about an altar, or a priest, or a sacrifice! Our Lord took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." Mark that, "this do"—it will not be right to do something else instead of this—and we must not do this for any other purpose than the one He mentions, "This do in remembrance of Me." This command raises a previous question, "Do we know Him?" We cannot remember Christ if we do not know Him.

25, 26. After the same manner, also, He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes—

"By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,

We keep the memory adored,

And show the death of our dear Lord,

Until He comes!

And thus that dark betrayal night, With the last advent we unite,

By one blest chain of loving rite Until He comes!"

27. Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. If such a man has treated "this bread" and "this cup" with contempt, He has treated "the body and blood of the Lord" with contempt! It shall be so reckoned to him. Many have been troubled by this verse. They have said, "We are unworthy." You are, this is quite true, but the text does not say anything about your being unworthy. Paul uses an adverb, not an adjective! His words are, "Whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily"—that is, in an unfit way—to gain something by it, as men used to take what they called, "the sacrament," to get into certain offices, or as some come to the communion table for the sake of the charitable gifts that are for the poor of the Church. This is to eat and drink "unworthily." To come carelessly, to come contemptuously, to say, "I do not care whether I am a Christian or not, but I shall come to the communion"—this is to eat and drink "unworthily." Notice the LY— we are all unworthy of this sacred feast—and if unworthiness could shut us out, who would dare to be here?

28. But let a man examine himself. Let a man look himself up and down, as a lawyer cross-questions a witness, as a man examines money to see whether it has the true ring of gold about it or not—"Let a man examine himself."

28. And so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. Let him come as a true Believer, as sincere, if not perfect, yet true! If not all he ought to be, yet in Christ! If not all he wants to be, yet still on the way to it, by being in Christ, who is "the way, the truth and the life."

29. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. He does not see the meaning of the emblem of Christ's death. He degrades the symbol by making it take the place of the thing signified. He sees the bread, but not the body—and he damns himself, condemns himself, by such eating. He is a loser rather than a gainer by eating and drinking unworthily.

30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. Persons coming to the Lord's Table in an improper spirit are very apt to come under God's discipline. Some will be taken ill and some will die. This discipline is being carried on in every true Church of God. God's Providence will work in this way if many treat the Table of the Lord as the Corinthians did—acting as if it were a common place for eating and drinking! Many of them were weak and sickly, and many died.

31. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. If we are God's people, we shall be judged by Him here for our wrongdoing. We shall not be like the world that is left to the Day of Judgment, but we shall be judged now. God will visit with temporal judgments those of His children who sin against Him.

32. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. You know that a man will see a great deal that is wrong in children in the street and say nothing about it. But if it is his own who is up to mischief, he will give him a sweet taste of the rod. So, if you belong to God, you cannot sin deeply without having a present judgment, a present discipline—but you ought to be thankful for it, painful though it may seem to be for the time, for—"when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

33. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. How gently Paul talks to these Corinthians! They deserve to be scolded, but he is very tender with them. He says, "If you must come together in this way, at least have the good manners to wait for one another. And if you do come to the communion of the Lord, treat it with that respect and reverence which it deserves."

34. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. May we, tonight, keep this feast in due order under the power of the Holy Spirit! And may we find a blessing in it to God's praise! Amen.

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