

The Lords Supper

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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, This is my body which (is) for you: this do for a remembrance of me. After the same manner 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 the cup, ye do show the Lords death till he come (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

We have here the special marked and distinct revelation given to the apostle Paul of this blessed feast; and like all revelations to him, we find it differing from those given to the other apostles, in this grand feature, namely, that Christ in glory, a man in the glory of God, Head of His body the Church, is He who communicates it to him.

We also read in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17.

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.

Here it receives a fresh character, unknown before Pauls doctrine unfolded it, in that the Lords Supper – partaken of according to the divine thought – is the symbol of the unity of Christs mystical body, the Church; and the great outward center of the gathering together of the Church of God on earth. It expresses its unity as formed by the Holy Ghost: it is then in a special way that the Lord Himself and His presence in the Assembly are realized. It is that moral center, in view of which each member of Christ judges himself and his ways, that he may eat thereof worthily – in a manner suited to the holiness and truth of Him to whom he is united by the Holy Ghost given him. It is that great moral center with respect to which the partaking thereof or otherwise shows that the person is outwardly confessing and professing the reality of his portion in Christ. It is with respect to it that, in failing to judge himself and partake worthily thereof, the assembled saints must deal with the failing brother, and put him out from among themselves, as a wicked person. It is in view of it that, when the individual has failed to judge himself, and it has fallen to the responsibility of the assembled saints to do so; or when the assembled saints have failed (as at Corinth) to deal with what was unsuited to Christ and the table of the Lord, the Lord Himself had as over His own house, acted, removing

some by death, and laid His chastening hand on others by sickness and weakness of body: for amongst them many were weak and sickly and many slept 1 Cor. 11.

It is in fact the great moral symbol and center outwardly and expressedly of the existence of the Church of God here below.

It is too, yet more blessedly, when partaken of in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, the most touching of all the services of faith of the people of the Lord: where the Lord is most sweetly realized as in the moment which God nor saint never can forget, when He gave Himself up for His glory and for our eternal salvation. The ministry of the gospel, from Gods heart to the world may be sweet to the soul. Souls are blessed, and the Spirits power is felt, and God is made known in a world that knows Him not. The ministry of Christ too for His saints, feeding them, and building them up, and producing worship in their hearts for all His unspeakable goodness, is touching to the soul, searching to the conscience, and freshness of love is shed abroad in the heart. All these and many more, are good and blessed; but at the Supper the soul and God meet as never otherwise: the heart of the saint and the sufferings of Christ Himself are together; His love is tasted; His perfections fed upon; in short the Lord himself is there in a way, that next to Heaven itself there is nothing like it here below. Man is not before us at such an hour. All this is put aside in the presence of a greater. It is indeed the gate of heaven, we may well say.

How we should therefore seek to get at Gods own mind about this feast. How we should seek to divest it from every thought and practice that mar the simple blessedness of what He – the Lord – has meant it to be to us. We shall sit down by and by at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We have no description of this scene. The Holy Ghost uses but one word to describe it, Blessed Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He adds, These are the true sayings of God. But here at the Lordly Supper, (kuriakon deipnon) one sits down with others like himself, still in bodies of humiliation, though saved by grace, and made meet for glory, to feed afresh upon Christ in His death. The night when all the world was against Him, and God forsook him as well as His own who loved Him truly. When Satans power and glamour was over mens souls, and Our perfect, blessed Savior passed through that night – His last with His disciples; and eat that paschal supper of which He speaks in those touching words, With desire (earnest yearning, longing, as the word means) have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer (Luke 22). From that paschal feast, and the institution of His own Supper, He passes to His agony in the garden, where He receives from His Fathers hands His cup of sorrow. Bearing it (as it were) in His hands, and before He leaves the scene of His agony, He is betrayed by His friend: he who had eaten bread with Him; and lifted up his hand against Him. He passes onwards, and next He is denied with oaths by one who thought no power could make his love for his Master to fail. Then, after His good confession, He is mocked and arrayed in the scarlet robe and crown of thorns. From this He passes into other hands and is scourged and condemned. At last came the cross of a malefactor where He was numbered with the transgressors, and the things concerning Him had their end. Forsaken now

of God, He enters the darkness of that scene, where no ray of light penetrated to relieve His soul; He cries to God at the hour of prayer – the ninth hour, and is not heard. What soul-depths were expressed in that unheard cry? But He who in view of all this, when instituting the feast, could twice give thanks, knew the light that was beyond it all, and the depths of that heart of God the Father, whose love He shared from past eternity.

These are some of the features which come before us as we remember Him. We could not remember one we knew not: we remember One we know. We know Him but in poor small measure: but it is the Lord who loves us we know, and we remember Him in the hour of His death and shame.

Now, although simplicity as to the line in which the Spirit of God would lead the gathered saints, in this service of faith, is what should characterize them; that is, in the remembrance of the Lord at that night of His betrayal, there is no special line of remembrance to be looked for prominently from the saints; still we must remember that in the midst of the assembly (says the Lord) I will sing praise unto thee Heb. 2:12. We should therefore look for His presence most specially at such a time. But when Christ leads the praises of His own, we should not find many thoughts about our former state, or our deliverance therefrom through His word. It is Himself we are to remember, and all that this remembrance would embrace. I would dread much therefore to see souls thinking of their own blessing – their own side of things too much. It would seem to me that they have not come together with a true thought in their souls.

We know happily, that the babes know the Father: it is the spirit of adoption which characterizes them and they rejoice more in their own blessing than in Him, the Blessor. The fathers in Christ know Him. I am sure too, that in the Lords Supper we have every chord touched that every heart, blessed through Christ, can ever feel and rejoice in. No chord has ever been tuned in any heart which does not find its echo there, and while every soul who comes together to eat the Lords Supper is doubtless in a different spiritual state, the chords in each are divinely strung, and when Christ is before the soul they must yield harmony.

Just as the varied aspects of Christ in His perfect life, His death and sin-bearing, and all, are presented in the offerings (see Lev. 1 - 7), many offerings taken to make one blessed Christ. So in the Supper there is found that which meets the song of every heart even though the note struck may sound more of its own blessing.

Still I think true worship always has Him as its food and its object: they worshiped Him. He reveals and displays the Father, and where the Father is worshiped in the Son, the Son reveals Him: and the Father seeketh such to worship Him. When God is seen in Christ the Son, and the Father in Him, and the Spirit in us is free to unfold His things to us, there worship has its true and proper level, and He dwells now in the praises of His church, as before Jehovah dwelt in the praises of Israel.

So as of old we find that that which prefigured the communion of the church of God, (the peace- offering 1 Cor. 10:18) came third in the order of the five offerings in Leviticus, to show us that the worship of the saints is grounded

upon what Christ was to God as a burnt-offering and its meatoffering, which accompanied it, both of them offerings of sweet savor. They pointed to all that Christ was to God in His devotedness to death for Gods glory; bringing glory to His nature as to sin, in the place where sin was; and yielding Himself wholly up to God; this the burnt-offering typified. And this was accompanied by a meat offering, called his meat offering. (The burnt offering and his meat offering.) This was Christs person in its purity and grace, and was bloodless and not atoning, though it accompanied that which was. Even when the ashes of both were on the altar of burnt-offering, there, on those ashes, was the peace-offering (or its memorial) burnt (see Lev. 3:5). The fourth and fifth offerings, i.e., Sinoffering, and Trespass-offering, were what Christ was made for us – not what He was in Himself personally; and they come after the Peace or Communion offering (Lev. 3).

Has this no voice for us? Can we not see here that he who best can enter upon what Christ was to God as burnt-offering and meat-offering, in His sweet savor, can best sustain and lead the worship of the assembled saints – for he is on the true ground of the souls power of worship to the Father.

It is a cause of deep joy surely, and never to be forgotten, to know that Christ bore our sins, and brought us into this place of blessing; but it is not the prominent thought in praise. Was the prodigal thinking much of the far country, and his rags and misery, and the change that had come, when he ate the fatted calf with the father? His fathers heart and house and joy silenced him. It would have no kindred note in his fathers merriment, to have reminded him of the rags and the debt he owed his father: he must joy in his fathers joy, be that what it may Luke 15. These and such like praises are those which Christ can sing and lead in the midst of His assembled saints. Could a soul uncertain of its salvation have a place at such a feast? Nay. In conscience and in faith we stand alone. But when seated with the Spirit, He leads our souls into communion with the Father and the Son. But all converted souls are not there. Surely not. Many souls are quickened but not at peace. The very life they have makes them feel their sins; feel their misery; but when they have believed, God seals them Eph. 1:13, having done so with the Holy Spirit of promise. Until then they are not members of Christ, nor in union with Him, Head of His body in heavenly places. How needful then that it should be seen to, that the person has received the Holy Ghost since he believed (Acts 19).

The Supper therefore is for such only: members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

It is celebrated according to Scripture by such, as the expression of the unity of the whole body of Christ on earth. It must be spread, and the Lords Table be gathered, to express this. Tables of varied sects and parties in the professing church could not be owned as the Table of the Lord. They are not so. A sect or system in it has its own dogmas and rules, and creeds, and ministers – generally framed for the unconverted as well as the saved. Perhaps a human ministry is theirs, or some one person, who absorbs all the functions of the members of Christs body professedly in himself The free action of the Spirit of God is shut out in the members. These and such like preclude and shut out the godly from

its communion.

But when the Lords Table is spread according to God it must be,

1st. The expression of the whole body of Christ on earth.

2nd. There must be nothing then, amongst those who are together, which would hinder in a doctrinal or a moral way, one single member of Christ on earth seeing them. To have it so would make it cease to be the Table of the Lord; and become the Table of a sect or party in Christendom. It is not that each there is compelled to see and understand all and every truth and doctrine that others do: not in any wise. This would be but to make the intelligence of the members of Christ and their unanimity in doctrine a term of fellowship, instead of it really being this, that they are members of that one body, and sound in faith and morals. Nay: the great foundation truths of Gods holy Word must be held aright. These would be such as the pure and holy person of Christ the Son of God; His incarnation; His atoning work; His resurrection and ascension; His eternal Sonship; His coming in flesh. The doctrines too of eternal punishment; of the Holy Ghosts presence in the Church; of the trinity of the persons of the Godhead, all such must be clearly defined in the soul. The babes in Christ know all these things. When the Holy Spirit dwells in a saint He has received the anointing that teaches all things. He is sensitive as to three things: touch Christ in any way and you touch the apple of his eye. Let him be true in the faith of Christs person, and you may depend that he is right in all these. Let him be false in his thoughts of Jesus, and his whole soul will more or less be filled with error. I trust no soul who has not Gods Christ then. He is the true test; the touchstone of true faith. All this assumes that he is at peace with God, and possesses His Spirit dwelling in him.

3rd. The first day of the week is the day of its celebration; as of all the great gatherings of the members of the churchs risen Head. When she was first formed at Pentecost His members continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and broke bread at home, praising God, etc. But when the Assembly was broken up at Jerusalem, and was no more to be found connected with the Jewish center of things, the Spirit of God led them together habitually on the first day of the week for this distinct purpose.

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7).

And this was endorsed by the Apostle abiding there to be with them at this feast.

How sensitive is the spiritually minded saint at this wondrous center of the churchs gathering. How spiritual one needs to be, to venture in the Lords blessed presence to aid in the worship of God. The more he thinks of the presence of his Lord and Master the more careful he is lest one word, one note he strikes, should not be in keeping with the Lords own heart, in communion with which the present Spirit leads His peoples songs. How the heart feels a discordant note at such a moment, when the ear of the soul is watching for the note to strike truly in the hearts of saints with the Lords. A hymn ill-chosen: the music unsuited to the words of the spiritual song: the haste of one: the tardiness of another: the lengthiness of some. What exercise of soul do not these things

produce, and how they mar the meeting which should refresh and feed the soul. How frequently too the judgment of self is neglected till the moment when the Lords presence is felt; and then for the first time the soul feels that it is not in spiritual power, and it must think of self instead of Christ!

O that my brethren might ponder these things, and that, poor and feeble though we are, we may grow in the sense of what it is to gather around our Lord: to realize His presence: to forget ourselves: to wait on Him: to know our strength: to carry clear, though empty vessels, into His presence: to find them filled to overflowing by Him whose fulness is inexhaustible; so full that the overflowing cup returns to Him, as living waters refresh the soul and find again their own level in His presence, and the presence of the Father.

I feel sure too that at times there are many whose hearts would refresh their Lord and brethren with five words of praise, who hold back and quench the Spirit – forcing some other to speak out of the true order of the Spirit of God (because forced upon him), and lose much for their own souls as well as for the souls of their brethren.

The heart yearns to see the assemblies of Gods saints filled with the Spirit, and such freshness of power and worship which sets man aside, and gives only place to Christ, or what is of the Spirit of our God.

What comfort to know that every first day of the week brings us nearer to that glorious day, in view of which we show forth the Lords death till He come! When that day arrives, and when we see Him, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; and every spiritual desire and longing will in us, as well as in Him, find its answer; and we shall enter that scene of which it is said: They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

And it is His glory which touches the heart even in that scene, and leads those who surround His throne to forget their own blessing, and their own glory, to leave the one, and divest themselves of the other, in the sweeter occupation of enjoying His glory and to say, Thou art worthy, O Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they shall be praising Thee to the ages of ages(LXX of Psa. 84:4).