

FENCING THE TABLE

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A SERMON

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“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.”
1 Corinthians 11:28.

THERE are two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church—and only two—Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These have been so misinterpreted, perverted and abused that the wish has sometimes crossed the minds of spiritual persons that they had never been instituted. We do not wonder that there should be a denomination of Christians who have given them up, though we think that in this matter they have not acted according to the Word of God. We ourselves retain them for this reason only, because we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained them—and we desire to observe them exactly as Christ ordained them. And only thus shall we find them instructive and helpful to our souls.

Baptism, the immersion of the Believer in water, is the token of his death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It sets forth the fellowship which he has with his Lord as the Apostle tells us—“Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him”—not that the plunge into the water confers any Grace upon the person who is baptized, but it is the *type*, the *emblem*, the instructive *symbol* of the new birth—which new birth consists in passing, by death and resurrection, into newness of life. You all know that we are only born once. A thing can only have one true beginning. Hence, Baptism is never to be repeated. Once done, it is done forever.

The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper and, as Baptism, sets forth, typifies, (mark you, *nothing more* than typifies), and is the emblem of the new birth, so the Lord's Supper is the emblem of the spiritual feeding of that new life. Now, though a man is born only once, he eats a great many more times than once and drinks a great many more times than once. Indeed, to eat and to drink often are necessary to the maintenance of our life. If we neglected to do so, we would soon find ourselves in an ill case. Hence, the Supper of the Lord, representing, as it does, the spiritual feeding of the new-born life upon the body and blood of Christ, (and only representing it, mark you—not really doing it in any carnal sense), is oftentimes to be repeated. We find that the early Christians very frequently broke bread together. I think they did so almost every day. It is recorded, by some of the early fathers, that the first Christians seldom met together, on any day of the week, without commemorating the death of Christ. Augustine mentions this and he seems to have taught that at least once in the week—on that blessed day which celebrates the Resurrection of our Lord, Christians should meet for the breaking of bread. I think that the oftener we meet for this purpose, the better it is for us. The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time—we are not under a law which binds us to this period or to that. Our Lord leaves it very much to our own loving hearts, but the words that Paul quotes, “This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me,” certainly imply that we should often “do this” in remembrance of our dear Lord and Savior.

A simple feast, even of bread and wine, a feast often celebrated, would be liable to be trifled with and misapplied. Hence, as Paradise of old was guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life, so stands this simple Supper of the Lord guarded with a flaming sword, of which my text is a portion—“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.”

Now, with this thought upon our minds, let us go to the text, itself, and observe how we are bidden to examine ourselves before we come to the Table of the Lord. We will speak, first, concerning *the necessity for this examination*. Next,

the person who is to perform it. Then, the vital points of the examination. And, lastly, the spirit in which we should come to the table after we have examined ourselves.

I. First, then, THE NECESSITY FOR THIS EXAMINATION.

The sense of that necessity will be very strongly impressed upon us if we remember that many *have profaned the Table of the Lord*. Hence it is incumbent upon us to examine ourselves lest we should do the same. Years ago—our grandfathers remember it well—men had to “take the sacrament,” as it was called, before they could be made mayors of towns, or hold certain offices in the municipalities and, in that way, the Communion Table became a passport to secular office. I tremble as I think how the laws of this land compelled men—though they ought never to have yielded obedience to such laws—to eat and drink judgment or condemnation to themselves as they profaned this holy ordinance! Others have made it, as I fear that some still make it, a means of obtaining alms—coming to the Communion Table because those who are members of the church are helped in the time of their poverty, or there is a distribution of alms money among the needy communicants. Ah, dear Friends, however poor you may be, it would be better for you to starve than to get help in this way if you are not really the Lord’s people! If any of you have acted thus, I charge you, before Almighty God, to do so no more! If we have any suspicions that we have ever done such a thing, we may well examine ourselves concerning that matter and sincerely repent if we have so sinned against the Lord.

Others come to the Communion as a piece of sheer superstition, really believing, poor deluded souls, that when they take the wafer into their mouths, they actually eat the flesh of Christ. Such a monstrous doctrine as that is only fit for cannibals—it is not a Doctrine of Christianity! What a profanation of the ordinance it is to come to it with such a notion as that! If any of us have the slightest idea that to partake of what is called “the sacrament”—though there is no such name as that for it anywhere in Scripture—confers Divine Grace, let all such thoughts be banished from our minds at once!

It is not a converting ordinance, nor a saving ordinance—it is an establishing ordinance and a comforting ordinance for those *who are saved*. But it never was intended to save souls, neither is it adapted to that end and if it is so misrepresented, it is apt rather to be the means of damning than of saving the soul, for he that so eats and drinks may, in very deed, be eating and drinking damnation to himself!

I fear that there are others who come to the Communion Table out of mere form. I find that it is the custom of certain persons to do this always on Christmas day and on Good Friday, though what particular sanctity there can be about those two days, I am sure I cannot tell. I see little enough of holiness about them and a great deal of sheer superstition. But let all of us be careful that we never come to the Communion simply because it is the first Sabbath in the month, or even because it is the day of our Lord’s Resurrection and because, as church members, we feel that we ought to come there. I mention these things—although I hope, to the most of you, they are unnecessary—because they are necessary to a certain class of persons who, in one or other of these ways, thoughtlessly profane the Table of the Lord.

But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we need to examine ourselves because it may be that though free from these evils which I have mentioned, we have come to this solemn feast without due solemnity, without serious thought, without the proper preparation of heart or the right observance of the ordinance. We have come very often to the Communion Table, yet there has been but little real heart-fellowship with Jesus. There has been bread upon the table and in our mouths, but we have not discerned the Lord’s body. There has been wine there, but we have not looked through the sign to the blood of which it is only the symbol. If it has been so with any of us, we have, to that extent, eaten and drunk unworthily—and I know not how much of deserved chastisement God may have laid upon us on that account—but the Apostle’s words have often been fulfilled since his day, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

This examination is necessary, next, *because the purpose of this ordinance requires that we should be in a fit condition for its observance*. What is the objective of this ordinance? “This do in remembrance of Me,” says the Lord Jesus. But you cannot remember what you do not know! how can you remember an unknown Christ? By coming to the Communion Table, you are supposed to let men see, as they look on at this ordinance, that you believe that Christ lived and died to save sinners. But suppose that you do not believe it—that you do not, at any rate, in your heart savingly believe it? Then you are not a fit person to proclaim that Truth of God to others by means of this ordinance. The Lord Jesus Christ does not want His enemies to remember Him—He wants His friends to cherish His memory and to keep the fact of His death prominently and permanently before the eyes of the world.

It must be His friends who must do this! Besides, this ordinance is one special means of communion between Christ and His people, but what communion can there be between you and Christ if you are a son of Belial? If you love sin and continue to live in sin, what possible fellowship can you have with the holy Christ? Will He have communion with a man who comes to His Table drunk? Or who comes from dishonest actions all week? Or who has been singing a lascivious song, but now turns to join with those who laud and magnify the name of the thrice holy God? Imagine not that Jesus Christ will welcome such as you are to His Table! If you do come, it will be at your most imminent peril! It can do you no good—it will be a curse rather than a blessing to you! So, let us examine ourselves because those who come to the Table of the Lord ought to be of such a sort that the purposes and objectives for which the ordinance was instituted may be realized in them.

But let us especially examine ourselves *because, if we come not aright, we shall incur very severe penalties*—the penalties which I have already mentioned to you. Let me again read to you these solemn words, “Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” And then follows the sure penalty upon true Believers who, nevertheless, come in an unfit state to the Table. I have read it to you before, but I will read it again—“He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground! Rush not into the sacred place, but come with that gracious timorousness—no, rather with that holy boldness which becomes a sinner who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and is robed in His spotless righteousness!

And, dear Friends, once more, there is a necessity for us to examine ourselves *because we must know that there are, among us, some who are doubtless partaking of the Lord’s Supper unworthily*. We have known, to our great sorrow, of some who have been harboring an unforgiving spirit, yet who have dared to come to the Communion Table. When I have really known that this has been the case, I have prevented the wrongdoer from sitting down with us, but, unknown to me, and to other ministers, it HAS often happened that persons have come professing to be Christians, yet all the while not manifesting the true spirit of Christianity toward some offending Brother or Sister. You remember how even the loving Apostle John writes, “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

Then, alas, there are some, who, by coming to the Communion, profess to be Christians, yet who, nevertheless, are all the while living in shameful sin which they dare not have discovered. This is one of the greatest sources of sorrow to true ministers of Christ and it has made us often wring our hands with agony and weep bitter tears before the Lord, when we have seen trees looking fair and green, but which, inwardly, as Bunyan said, were “so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil’s tinderbox.” Their profession was a false one, for, all the while their moral character was unsound. There was a rottenness about them which no one discovered till, upon some fatal day—fatal to their own reputation, but good for the Church’s purification—they were exposed and driven out with shame. Judas was found out at last. Ananias and Sapphira were at last found out and cut off from among the people of God—and the unclean and unholy among the early Christians were excommunicated from the assembly of the saints.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if, to your own personal knowledge, this has been the case with others, forgive me when I ask—Is there not at least the possibility that it may also be the case with you? At any rate, you will do well to examine yourselves and if, after having honestly examined, you can say, “No, that is not the case with me,” then bless God that you can truthfully say so. Take no credit to yourselves, but give to God’s Grace the whole of the praise. Still, do look thoroughly to this matter. “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith.” I, as a minister, am bound to examine myself because there have been eminent preachers of the Gospel who, nevertheless, have lived unhallowed lives. No preacher may dare to say, “My office screens me from this test.” Deacons and elders of the church, you must examine yourselves because you have known church officers who have brought disgrace upon the offices that they have filled. And you Sunday school teachers, open-air preachers, tract distributors and the like—and you members of the Church—however useful you may be and however highly you may be respected by your fellow members, I beseech you, nevertheless, shirk not this duty, but let each one examine himself before he comes to sit down at the Table of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak about THE PERSON WHO IS TO PERFORM THIS EXAMINATION—“Let a man examine *himself*.”

Let not anyone say, “I was examined by the proper officers of the church before I was admitted into church membership, so I do not need any further examination.” Now, mark, it is the duty of every church, in receiving members, to judge all applicants by their fruits. “By their fruits shall you know them,” is our Lord’s own test. We must have a credible profession of faith, supported by a life that is consistent therewith, but that is all upon which we can form a judgment. We cannot examine the heart and we cannot infallibly judge the life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that a certificate of church membership is to excuse him from the duty of personal self-examination, he is grievously mistaken. No, dear Friend, *you* know what your secret thoughts are and what your private actions are and, therefore, it is to *yourself* that this duty is committed—“Let a man examine *himself*.”

“Well, but,” someone may say, “my friends—my private friends—are quite satisfied concerning my spiritual condition. I have been talking to my godly mother. I have been conversing with my praying father. I have had sweet fellowship, just lately, with a good old Christian friend—and they all seem perfectly satisfied with me.” I am glad they are but Paul says, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “Let a man examine *himself*.” There is no greater error under Heaven than to try to shift the responsibility of our own personal religion on to friends or to so-called “priests.” There can be no more gigantic imposture than the supposed sponsorship of infants! It amazes me that anybody can dare to say, on any child’s behalf, that it shall renounce the pomp and vanities of this world, and all else that is mentioned in the Church Catechism. But it would be an equally gigantic imposture if we were to establish a sponsorship for grown-up people! Both of them are wicked and neither of them can be carried out—we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people—the Apostolic rule must remain, “Let a man examine *himself*.” Look you well to the state of your own souls and, to this end, go to God in prayer and say, as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE VITAL POINTS IN THIS EXAMINATION? There are a good many, but I have arranged them under five heads for the sake of brevity and to help your memories.

First, my dear Friends, *examine yourselves concerning your knowledge*. There are some who are too ignorant to come to the Table of the Lord. They may have taken their M.A. degree at Oxford or Cambridge, they may even be Doctors of Divinity and yet be too ignorant to come to the Lord’s Table. What knowledge is necessary for coming aright to the Table? I answer—*Saving* knowledge—a *living* knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “This do in remembrance of Me.” You cannot remember a person you never knew, so you must be acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ if you would observe this ordinance as He instituted it. There is the bread upon the table. Have you ever known what it was to be *spiritually* hungry? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the only Food that can relieve the hunger of your spirit? Have you learned to know Him through feeding upon Him by faith? Then you are a fit person to partake of the bread on the Communion Table because you are a person who understands what it signifies—you who have been satisfied by feeding upon Christ.

There is also the wine cup upon the Table. Were you ever *spiritually* thirsty? Did you then see how the Lord Jesus Christ, by His atoning Sacrifice, has fully met all the needs of your soul? Have you really partaken of Jesus Christ and has your heart been refreshed, revived and cheered by the application to it of the precious blood of Jesus? If so, you understand the meaning of that Communion Cup and you are a fit and proper person to partake of it. But if you have never known this spiritual hunger and thirst—if you have never realized your own spiritual needs—and if you have not known what it is for Christ to supply those needs—I charge you to stay away from this Table until you do know these things! Otherwise you will be eating and drinking in utter ignorance and the mere physical acts will be of no service whatever to you. May the Lord give you to know Him whom to know is eternal life! And when you do know Him, then come to His Table, for you will not then eat and drink unworthily.

Then, next, *examine yourselves concerning your faith*. Knowledge is all in vain without faith. And the knowledge of which I have been speaking is a knowledge that is closely allied with faith. Are you trusting alone in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ? I have asked myself that question many scores of times and I do not recollect that I ever had any hesitancy about how to answer it. I know that I am trusting in Jesus! If I am really living—if there is any truth in my own consciousness—I am sure that I have trusted my soul for time and for eternity wholly to the keeping of that Savior who lived, died and rose again for sinners! Well, that being so, I have a right to come to the Communion. Christ wants Believers at His Table—they are His own children. If you are believing in Him, He invites you to come and you will be welcome

if you come! You will not eat and drink unworthily, dear Friend, if you apprehend, by faith, that Christ's flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed. You will come to the Table in the right manner.

In the third place, I want you to *examine yourselves concerning your repentance*. In the emblems upon the Communion Table, you can see something of what it cost your Lord to redeem you from sin, death and Hell. The bread, representing the flesh of Jesus, is separate from the wine, which represents His blood. And the separation of the blood from the flesh indicates death—a bleeding away of life in the most acute anguish. It cost your Lord untold agony to redeem you from going down into Hell, so can you ever imagine that any man is a fit person to participate in the emblems which set forth that agony if he has never felt, in his own soul, any agony on account of sin? What right has an impenitent person to come where the death of Christ, on account of sin, is especially set forth? A heart that has never been broken because of sin—shall it come and remember the broken body and broken heart of Jesus? A heart of stone that has never been melted—shall it come and remember His precious flesh that was melted in the agonies of Calvary? If your eyes have wept no tears of repentance, how can you properly remember Him whose veins wept blood to redeem His people from their sins? It is a contrite heart and a broken spirit that Christ wants here! Only with such persons will God deign to dwell and only with such will Christ commune, either at His Table or anywhere else. See to it, then, that you have genuine repentance.

The next vital point for self-examination is love. *Examine yourselves concerning your love*. I think, Brothers and Sisters, that none of us can worthily eat of this bread and drink of this cup unless we truly love our Lord. So I venture to put the question to each one of you here. I know not your names, but the name that is used by our Lord Jesus will do for you. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" You answer, "Yes." Do you? Then I will put the question again. "Simon, son of Jonas, Jesus says to you, 'Do you love Me?' And yet a third time I may put it, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" 'Tis Jesus with the pierced hands and with the pierced feet who speaks, and He says, "Do you love Me?" This is the test of whether you may come to His Table, or not. Can you answer, "'Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.' Sometimes my friends hardly know it, for I am not always as consistent as I should be. Sometimes, Lord, I have even to question it myself, but You know that, deep down in my heart, notwithstanding all my coldness and forgetfulness, all my wanderings and all my faults—You know that I do love You." Come along, Brother! Come along, Sister! You will not eat and drink unworthily if this is true concerning your love to your Lord!

There is one other matter which is vital, and that concerns obedience. *Examine yourselves concerning your obedience*, for, unless a man obeys the commands of Christ, he does not prove that he really loves Christ. If we truly love Him, we shall keep His commandments. If Paul had said that no one had a right to come to the Communion unless he was perfect, I certainly could not come and I feel sure that there is no one in the whole world who would have the right to come. Perfect? Ah, perfect weakness! And if anybody says he is perfect in any other sense than that, he must be possessed of perfect folly! But the obedience that we must have is of this sort. Do you desire to be perfectly obedient to your Lord? Do you, in your heart, desire to be rid of every sin and to forsake every false way? Is there any sin that you would harbor and indulge? Then you are not truly obedient! But can you, on the other hand, say, "Lord, I would be purged from every evil of every kind and I desire to obey You in all things. No matter how it may grate upon my feelings, or how contrary it may be to my wishes, where You bid me, I will go, and what You command me, I will do—your Grace helping me"? Is that what you say? Then you may come to the Communion, for Jesus Himself welcomes you! But if you will not give up sin—if you have even one pet sin that you are still determined to keep, you are a traitor to Christ and you have no more right to come to His Table than Judas Iscariot had!

IV. Now, in closing, I want to speak a few words concerning THE SPIRIT IN WHICH, AFTER THIS SELF-EXAMINATION, WE OUGHT TO COME TO THE COMMUNION TABLE.

Ought we not to come, dear Friends, each one of us, *in the spirit of holy wonder*? This is the Lord's Table and I am coming, with the Lord's redeemed people, to eat and drink at it—what a wonder that I am here! I never come to the Communion without being astonished at the amazing Grace of God to me and especially as I think of this great church which God has been graciously pleased to gather in this place. How much I owe to Him! How constantly am I struck with the marvels of His mercy to me! And each one of you, my fellow Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, has some peculiar reason for feeling the same kind of wonder in your own case.

Next, we ought to come to the Communion *with a sense of self-abasement*. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to think little of ourselves everywhere, but when we come to the Table of our Lord, we ought to shrink to nothing—yes, to less than nothing! In the wilderness, man did eat angels' food, but angels never ate such food as this! Yet we are permitted to come and partake of it. So, let us sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink till we are lost in wonder, love and praise that we should ever be permitted to come to this sacred feast!

Let us come, at the same time, *in a spirit of strong desire*. I believe that in a sermon people always get something good when they come desiring to get something good. A hungry congregation will be sure to be fed! And if we come to the Communion Table feeling, "My Lord and Master, I desire to meet with You. The bread alone will not satisfy me—I need to feed spiritually upon Your flesh. The wine will not quench my soul's thirst—I need spiritually to receive Your blood into my inmost soul. I desire, with all fervor of holy ardor, to put my finger into the print of the nails and to thrust my hand into Your side!" If you come to the Communion in this spirit—longing for Christ—you shall have Him! Open your mouths and pant for Him, and the living waters shall quench your soul's thirst.

Then come to the table *with a believing hope*. Perhaps you have not seen your Master's face lately—you have been sorrowfully walking in darkness. Come to the Communion hoping that He will look through the lattice and reveal Himself to you. Do you not know that the two ordinances are windows of agate and of diamonds to the opened eyes of His people? Perhaps your loving Lord will look again through one of those windows while you are sitting at His Table. So, come expecting Him! Come with your heart wide open to receive its rightful Lord and Master and, with your eyes of love looking up to Him, surely, if the eyes of your love look up to Him, the eyes of His love will look down upon you! If you come to His Table, singing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies"—if you come passionately desiring to enjoy His company—then you may also come with the full confidence that His company will be given to you!

I have only one thing more to say. Come to the Communion Table resolved that if in the ordinance you do not find your Lord—if in the breaking of bread, He is not manifested to you and if, in the pouring forth of the wine, you get no taste of His love—you *will still trust in Him*. Do not depend on outward signs and visible evidences, but say, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' And if His Table should yield me no spiritual meat, I will still cleave to my Master. And if He will only let me be as a dog beneath His Table, I will eat the crumbs that fall there and so shall I live, for in every crumb of His mercy there is life everlasting!"

As for you who, perhaps, have never thought upon this subject, I have to say just this to you, and then I have done. Remember that religion does not begin with ordinances. While I have been speaking to professing Christians concerning the Communion, I hope that none of you have been thinking of it as a saving ordinance. You, as sinners, have to exercise faith in Christ before you have anything to do with Believers' Baptism—you have to come to Christ, Himself, before you are qualified to come to the Lords Table. As soon as you have, by faith, received Jesus Christ, Himself, as your Lord and Savior, the tokens and emblems of His death will become instructive to you. But until Jesus Christ is wholly yours, hands off all these holy things! For, as uncircumcised Philistines would have had no right to be at the Paschal Supper, so have those who are not renewed in heart with that circumcision that is made without hands, no right to come to the feast of Christian love which is reserved for the followers of the Crucified! Come to Jesus, to Jesus only, and put your trust in Him! God grant that you may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:17-30; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:18-34.

Matthew 26:17-26. *Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began, every one of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed*

Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, you have said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it. So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot, occurred during the Passover or the Supper. According to one account, it would seem to be one and, according to another account, the other, but, indeed, the one ordinance was almost imperceptibly merged into the other. I want you carefully to notice, as we read this narrative through, whether you can see, here, any trace of an altar. Look with both your eyes and see whether you can find any trace of a priest offering a sacrifice. Watch diligently to see whether you can perceive anything about kneeling down, or about the elevation or the adoration of "the host." Why, even the Roman Catholic church knows better than to believe in what it practices! Most of you have seen copies of the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, himself a Catholic of the old school. How does he picture those who were at the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why, they are all sitting around a table, with the Lord Jesus in their midst! I wonder that they exhibit and still allow to be in their churches, a picture like that, which, painted by one of their own artists—most effectually condemns their base idolatry in which a wafer-god is lifted up, to be adored by men, who must be besotted, indeed, before they can prostitute their intellects so grossly as to commit such an act of sin! What a rebuke to that idolatry is conveyed by this simple statement—"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it."

26. *And broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said. Take, eat, this is My body.* The Romanists do not even break the bread. They have a wafer so as to avoid anything like an imitation of the example set by our blessed Lord and Master. He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the paschal feast—the ordinary unleavened bread—and He broke it and gave it to His disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat, this is My body." Not, of course, the literal body, which was there at the table—this was the emblem of His body about to be broken on the Cross on the behalf of all His people!

27. *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it.* "Every one of you, take your own personal share." This, also, the Papists have perverted by denying the cup to the laity.

28-30. *For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, 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. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.* It was a social feast, somewhat funereal and tintured with sadness, for Jesus was about to go from them to die. Still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113 to 118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and His Apostles sang a hymn and I always like to think of Him as leading the little company—going to His death with a song upon His lips, His voice full of melody and made more sweet than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I would like always to sing, whenever we come to the Communion Table, after the fashion in which they sang that night—"When they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Now let us read what the Apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:18-22. *For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating everyone takes before the other his own supper and one is hungry, and another is drunk. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? 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.* These Corinthians fell into a great many errors. Everybody was a speaker and said whatever he pleased. And they had no proper order or rule. Among other evils—when they met together to observe the Lord's Supper, they brought their own food with them, thinking that eating thus together was keeping the sacred feast. So the richer ones feasted to the full and the poor went almost without anything. "One is hungry, and another is drunk," says the Apostle, and he tells them that this was not the right way of observing the Lord's Supper. Yet it is evident that the idea which was in their mind was that of feasting together. They had exaggerated it and carried it to a grievous excess, but that was the idea they had concerning it. Certainly, there was no altar, or priest, or anything of the sort. Now the Apostle tells them how the ordinance should be observed.

23-25. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I deliver unto you, 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. 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 you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. How wonderfully simple it all is! There is nothing here of the paraphernalia of a “sacrament.” It is a simple memorial festival, that is all.

26, 27. *For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* He shall be guilty with respect to that body—not with respect to the *bread* against which he cannot sin—but with respect to that *body which is represented by the bread*, and with respect to that *blood which is represented by the cup*. See with what holy solemnity this humble feast is fenced and invested? There is a Divinity which hedges the simple ordinance of Christ lest men should trifle with it to their eternal ruin!

28, 29. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.* “Judgment” or “condemnation” is the word in the original, not, “damnation.” That is *not* a fair translation, neither does it express the Truth of God. He that eats and drinks unworthily condemns himself in so doing—he comes under judgment for that act. This is the kind of judgment that falls upon Christians if they come unworthily to the Lord’s Table—

30-32. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* Believers who are rendered sick, or who even die because of their offense against the Lord’s ordinance, are not therefore condemned to Hell! Far from it—it is that they may not be so condemned that God visits them. “When we,” the people of God—“are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned *with the world*.”

33, 34. *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.* By due attention to the Apostle’s injunctions, they would be able to rightly observe the ordinance. And we, also, may learn, from what Paul wrote, how we may worthily come to the Table of our Lord.

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