

The Lord's Table

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 10:14-17

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Open your Bibles with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Our subject is the Lord's table and that is our uppermost thought this evening.

But I begin with this comment: This is a most religious world in which we live, especially our day and our generation. And these religious people of our day and generation, they have many thoughts concerning this Lord's table, this subject. And they have many opinions regarding this ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ which we are gathered here in his name to celebrate. The religious world calls this Lord's table a sacrament.

Now, that is not a bad word. The old timers used to use it quit a bit, but they used it in a different way from the way that the Catholics use it today. The Catholic Church and some other places look upon the Lord's table as a sacrament meaning a saving ordinance, a saving ordinance, that by which men are saved from their sins.

But when you talk about a sacrament you may be...the old timers used to talk about it as a means of grace. They talk about it as a saving ordinance, but these old timers talk about it as a source, not of salvation, but it is the well spring, it is the means of grace and it is the well spring of redemption which we find in Christ.

You see, it is not a saving ordinance. The Catholic Church has seven recognized sacraments. This may be important to you and it may not, but they recognize seven saving ordinances called sacraments. One is baptism, you are saved...your baptism contributes to your salvation. Then there is confirmation when the young people are confirmed in the faith. That is a way of salvation. And then the eucharist which is the holy communion or the Lord's table, but they call it the holy communion and that is a saving ordinance. And to them penance, that's the confession, your confession of sins. They have to come before the priest to confess their sins and that absolves them, that puts away their sins. You make a confession, you put it away. Baptist puts it away. Confirmation puts it away. The eucharist puts it away. The penance puts it away. And then they have what they call the holy orders, the holy orders are the establishment of the priesthood. See, they have to have not Christ our great high priest, but a human priest to intercede for them and to give them the eucharist. And then there is matrimony. That is a saving ordinance. And then, number seven, the last rites when they put away their sins forever.

So those are called sacraments. But we don't call this a sacrament in the sense that it is saving, no it is not saving. It is a means of grace and it is that Jesus Christ our Lord is the source and the well spring of redemption. We find all we need in him, in him.

And then some people look upon this ordinance as a mere ritual. They come to the communion or the Lord's table or this particular gathering as a form and a ceremony to help them feel religious and to help them spiritually, some way to overcome their fears.

But this is not a ritual. The apostle Paul used more meaningful terms than sacrament and rituals and these things. The apostle Paul used words that I want to talk about from this Scripture here in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. So let's look at it in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. I want you to look at verse 14. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." That is the way this particular portion that deals with the Lord's table starts out. And the reason Paul starts it out this way is these people that are involved in idolatry in observing the Lord's table as a sacrament or eucharist or whatever. So Paul starts out, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Idolatry of any sort, of any sort which is particularly offensive to our God.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Idolatry is particularly offensive to our God. And not only the worship of idols or an act of idolatry, but the very appearance of idolatry even if it smells like idolatry. Do you see what he is talking about? Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from it. Stay away from it. Idolatry.

Now, here is what I want you to look at. Picture the way that in which many places observe this ordinance. Back when I was in the navy we went into a invasion, the invasion of Iwo Jima and we had a Catholic priest come on board the ship with all of his paraphernalia in order to give the Lord's table to us who were on the ship and the marines who were there to invade that island. And I remember. I didn't know much about what is going on here but I got up with the rest of them and they had all these crosses and uniforms and different things like that and we got in line and we kneeled, 350 marines and 120 sailors. And we kneeled and stuck out our tongues while a priest dipped in his garb and fancy robes dipped a wafer in the wine and put it on my tongue and on the next tongue just like some of you men know what I am talking about. You have been there.

Well, that is the way they observed the Lord's table, surrounded by a beautiful buildings and stately edifices and crosses everywhere, crosses everywhere and uniforms of religion, robes. And the incense and then the kneelings and then the kneelings and then the assistance of these priests.

Now, when our Lord came to take that last supper, the first...the last...the passover, when he came to observe that first Lord's table, he didn't even own the building. It was

somebody else's house. He sent his disciples to find a man who had a house already, just an ordinary dwelling, no temple, no synagogue, no church, just an ordinary building.

And then he went there with the disciples and they came in not dressed up, not with robes, fishermen garb. And they came in and he got bread and wine, ordinary unleavened bread and wine. And they...they didn't kneel. They sat together around the table. And our Lord says, "You take this bread." He took it, broke it, gave thanks, gave it to them. Simplicity.

Flee idolatry. Flee anything that looks like it, smells like it, smacks of it and run from it as fast as you can. It is not of God. That's right. He is the one that is the primary object, person of our faith, Christ Jesus. So I treasure he said in verse 14, "Flee from idolatry. Flee from it. And verse 15, "I am speaking to you as wise men. I am speaking to you as wise men," and now you judge what I say. You be careful. I speak to intelligent men whom God has made intelligent, sensible men and women whom God has given them a sound mind and a discerning heart. And I speak to believing men and women. And Paul said, "You listen to what I am saying. You listen to what I say. Flee idolatry. Flee idolatry."

Firstly, in regards to this blessed ordinance called the Lord's table, the Lord's table.

All right, the next verse, the next verse. Verse 16. "This cup of blessings, this cup of blessings which we bless. Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? Isn't that what this is? This bread which we break. Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

What does that mean this cup? He said, "This cup of blessing, this cup of blessing."

Well, It is the cup, it is the cup of the blessing of the cup of his suffering, his suffering. He referred to it quite often. I want you to turn to a few Scriptures. First, John chapter 18, John chapter 18, the cup, our Lord's cup. This cup is the cup of suffering, his suffering.

Listen to John 18, verse 10. This is when they came to the garden to arrest him in John 18;10. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword drew it and smote the high priest servant, cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, 'Put up your sword into the sheath. This cup, the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'"

That is the cup I am talking about, the cup of his sufferings.

And then when he prayed in Gethsemane's garden he said, "Father, if it be possible for this cup to pass from me, if not, thy will be done. Not my will, but thy will."

This is the cup, the cup of suffering. That is what this cup which we bless, this cup is the cup of his suffering.

And then, secondly, this cup is the cup of the new covenant. Now, Jim read about that. Turn to Luke 22, Luke chapter 22. This cup is the cup of the new covenant, not the old letter, not the old law, but the new covenant, the covenant, the everlasting covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus. Luke 22, verse 19. Listen. “And he took bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave it to them saying, ‘This is my body which was given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new testament, covenant in my blood which is shed for you.’”

That is what this cup is. This cup which we bless, it is the cup of his sufferings, his agony for our sins. And it is the cup of a new covenant, a new testament in Christ Jesus.

Old things are passed away. All things become new. Everything fulfilled in him or us.

And then, thirdly, this cup is the cup of salvation which we bless. This is no ordinary cup. This is the cup of salvation. Listen. Turn to Psalms. David, Psalm 116, Psalm 116, verse...oh, I love this Scripture in Psalm 116, verse 12.

Now listen to this. Open your Bible. Psalm 116, verse 12. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation,” this cup of his sufferings, this cup, this new testament, this cup of salvation. “And I will call upon the name of the Lord and I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of his people.” I will take it, this cup.

And then this cup is my cup. That’s right. His cup of his sufferings, the cup of his covenant, it is the cup of his salvation, but it is my cup. Let’s read about, Psalm...well, you don’t need to read it. You already know it by heart. Psalm 23, Psalm 23, verse four and five. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me. They rod and they staff they comfort me. And though preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil and my cup...” I just love that old cup. It’s just running over. It is full and running over. That is what they used to do long years ago, isn’t it, in the oriental times and in the eastern part we call the far eastern, near east. But anyway. When a good friend came to eat with you and he pulled out his cup and you took the wine and you didn’t give him a little spot, you didn’t give him a half way. You ran it over. That let him know, “My house is your house. My blessings are your blessings. My cup just runs over. It is just full to overflowing. Your blessings of the Lord.”

And we bless this cup. Let’s go back to our text in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. “The cup of blessing which we bless.” That’s why we gather here, to bless this cup. This salvation, his new covenant, his redemption, his atonement, and my cup. It runs over.

And he says, “This cup of blessing which we bless,” how do we bless this cup? This is no ordinary meal. He said, “You have houses to eat in. Well, eat in your house. But this is not just an ordinary meal. This is not just ordinary bread and ordinary wine. This bread represents the body of Christ. This wine represents the blood of the Son of God.

And how do I bless it? I bless it, number one, by faith, by faith. That is what Paul said over here in 1 Corinthians 11. He said in verse 26, 1 Corinthians 11, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do show the Lord's death until he comes. Wherefore whosoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, in an unworthy manner, in a careless manner, in a meaningless manner, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body, not receiving it by faith, not receiving it as it is meant to be, for the purpose for which it is intended, the glory of him who gave it to us."

And so we bless this cup by believing. That is what Todd was talking about the other night. I believe. I believe, that's all. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Don't you? And I accept, receive him by faith.

Secondly, we bless this cup by prayer. When our Lord took the cup he gave thanks. When our Lord took the bread and break it, he gave thanks. I take the cup and I give thanks. I take the bread. I give thanks. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

And then we bless this cup by meditation and by discernment. "Let a man examine himself." Not seeing if he is sinless or without fault or failure, but being sure that as a sinner he receives this bread and this wine as God intended it and meant it to be to redeem us from our sins through his precious blood, discernment.

Well, let's look at our text one more time, chapter 10, verse 16. "This cup of blessings which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? This bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" It is not a ritual. It is not a saving ordinance. It is the communion of the body of Christ and the communion of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does this word "communion" mean?

"This bread which we bless and this cup which we take is the communion of our Lord Jesus Christ." The word "communion" denotes three things. Number one, it is a union. Communion is a union. It is our union with him. It is his union with us. This is what he said. "I in them and thou in me." This cup is the communion, my union with him and his union with me. It is communion. We are one. This bread is a communion. We are one. "I in them and thou in me, that they might be one. But of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption." The communion.

And Paul used that as a picture of you people who are married, husband and wife. He said the husband and the wife are one. They are one. In the same way we are one with Christ. Brethren, you have a marriage union. We have a marriage union with our Lord. That's right.

And then, secondly, this word means...communion means participation, participation.

Let's see if we can give you some help on that. Turn to Romans eight, Romans eight. This is the Communion of the body of Christ, the blood of Christ and the body of our Lord. In Romans eight, verse 15. "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba, Father.' The spirit himself beareth witness that with our spirit we are children of God. And if we are children, we are heirs of God. If so be that we suffer with him we will be raised together."

So communion is not just communion, but union with Christ. It is not just our participation. If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him freely give us, participate with him in all things. Everything is ours in Christ. This is a communion of the blood of Christ and the body of Christ.

This is a union. This is a participation. And this is a fellowship. 1 John chapter one, 1 John chapter one. This is a fellowship. This is a blessed, blessed fellowship. This is a wonderful, wonderful, fellowship in 1 John 1:3. Listen in 1 John 1:3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship with us and clearly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full and this is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you that God is life and in him is no darkness. If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

That's me and you, yes, but that is me and him. The fellowship is with him and with one another. "And the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin."

All right. That's our text.

I'll share something else with you and I'll be through. 1 Corinthians 10, right here, verse 17. "This cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, the union, the participation, the fellowship of the very blood of the Son of God? This bread which we break is it not the communion, the union, the participation, the riches, the inheritance, the fellowship of the very body of Christ? Oh, now. We being many are one bread. We being many are one bread."

What does that mean? Well, we are many; Jews, Gentiles, male, female, bond and free, old and young, rich and poor and so forth and so on. Just keep going.

In fact he said, "I saw a multitude which no man could number," a multitude which no man can number. And yet we are one. One body, one bread. One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is above all. We being many are one bread and one body.

As the bread which we bless. See we have got this bread here. Now the Lord took the bread. Let's take the bread when the Lord took the bread, unleavened bread, a loaf of bread, a loaf of bread.

How many grains of corn do you reckon went into that loaf of bread? You stop and think about it. How many grains of corn make up a loaf of bread. This corn is gathered from the fields, many, many grounds. It is threshed. It is beaten. It is cast into the oven. It is broken. It is distributed out among these disciples and it is eaten. And the Lord says this is one bread.

All these grains of corn are just one bread. That is all it is.

And this wine which we drink. How many grapes when into this, this wine? How many thousands of grapes which are gathered from the Lord's vineyard? Well, that is a special vineyard, now isn't it? He gathered. They are his. And they are stomped on. And they are squeezed and they are brought together in his own time and stored in a dark place awaiting the time when they will make the best possible wine.

Yet they just [?]. All of these that he has gathered together, grains of corn and they have been threshed and they have been beaten and they have been broken and they have been bruised and they have been cooked in the Lord's fire and they...and then they have been broken, and then they have been given to somebody to glorify God. And all these grapes, one blood. One bread and one body. Bread of heaven on thee I feed for my flesh is meat indeed. Ever may my soul be fed with this true and living bread.

Day by day with grace supplied through the life of my Lord who died, vine of heaven thy blood supplies this blessed cup of sacrifice. Tis thy blood my healing gives and to thy cross I look and live, but Christ is my life. Oh let me be always rooted and grounded in thee.

We being many are one bread. We being many be one blood. Thank God that we are in that body and in that precious blood and in the Savior's [?].