

The Lord's Supper: A Renewal (taken from our confession and lesson #7 on membership)

Of a Gospel Church We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ.

Concerning the Lord's Supper our Confession also says, "*that baptism by faith is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper (75), in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ (76); preceded always by solemn self-examination*"

There are a few things we notice in our confession concerning the Lord's Supper. First of all, as a church, we will regularly observe the Lord's Supper.

Second, we believe that the Lord's Supper is for baptized Christians. The logic is obvious. Why would someone be united with Christ, then refuse or neglect baptism out of ignorance or whatever reason, and then take the Lord's Supper with the body of Christ, especially when the Bible says to examine yourself to make sure you are right with God, and while examining yourself, you realize you haven't obeyed the first command of Christ to be baptized?

Third, self-examination is a biblical requirement. As we observe communion together, we always emphasize an inward look at ourselves as sinners and in faith and a heart of repentance, remember that Christ has covered our sins. This is what distinguishes a true confession from a false profession. A Christian is repentant, always looking to forsake sin and grow in godliness. Let me also mention that self-examination implies that a person is able to think and look at their life in examination, which is tricky when we think of small or younger children.

Now, when we consider both the ordinances, baptism is an initiatory rite, symbolizing our union with Christ. It pictures to the world our commitment to Christ and His Church. The Lord's Supper is a continuing rite that we observe repeatedly. Look at it like this. If baptism is the wedding ceremony where the believer publicly declares his or her commitment to Christ, the Lord's Supper is an anniversary celebration in which the wedding vows are renewed.

Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are pictures of different aspects of the gospel. Baptism is a picture of justification, the one-time act of God where he declares the believer to be righteous, not guilty, based upon the death of Christ. Christ has fulfilled the law on behalf sinners. Those who trust Christ are justified. That is why Paul can say, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**" (Rom. 8:1).

The Lord's Supper is a picture of sanctification, which is growth in holiness that follows conversion. It is one of the benefits Christ purchased on the cross, our sanctification. Hebrews 10:14 says, "**For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**" This means the believer's sanctification is an ongoing process where the Holy Spirit works powerfully to produce more and more godliness throughout the Christian life.

Just as we are being renewed daily by the Spirit of Christ, we repeatedly take the Lord's Supper as a Church. As we partake, we are picturing in numerous ways that the Gospel, the Lord Jesus is our life. His person and work is the basis, not only for our justification, but for our CONTINUED RENEWAL and godliness in the Christian life. As bread and wine nourish our bodies with physical renewal, so Christ nourishes our souls and renews us daily. He is our nourishment! He is our sustenance! He is our refreshment! He is our source of life!

With this in mind let's consider 3 aspects of renewal connected with the Lord's Supper.

1. The Lord's Supper is a renewal to Christ, especially as we remember his death.

Look at 1 Cor. 11:24. Jesus said, "**and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'**" As we take the Lord's Supper we remember Christ. This word "remember" is far deeper than a mere commemoration or simple recalling. It is a vivid and powerful recollection of a past event that affects the present. In the Lord's Supper we remember all the benefits of Christ's death knowing that his death was for us.

My mind immediately goes to Isaiah 53:4-6: "**Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**" And then in vv.10-11: "**Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.**"

There is nothing that brings comfort to the soul than to remember the benefits of Christ's death for his people. (If time, reiterate Titus on redemption, purification, washing of generation, renewal of the Holy Spirit, justification, sanctification, and all the comforts by the Spirit as we go through this life.)

2. The Lord's Supper is a renewal of our commitment to Christ and His Church.

1 Cor. 10:17 links the Lord's Supper to the unity of the body. "**For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.**" This communion is a common meal, shared by everyone. And we share it together. When we participate in the Lord's Supper together, we give a clear sign of our unity with one another. The Lord's Supper is not for those on the outside of Christ. It is for us. And we are one in Christ.

One of the problems at the Church at Corinth was their lack of unity. This was a great sin. Listen to the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 11:18-22 "**Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For**

there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*."

There are many specifics we could say about this passage. But, the important issue is that the Corinthian believers were not regarding one another in love as they came together for the Supper. There were divisions. The rich homeowners were not waiting on the slaves, the poor, and others to eat of the meal. (In those days the Lord's Supper was a full-on meal.) We don't have this context today with the Lord's Supper. However, we do have the same application. They were not unified in love for one another as they did not consider the body of Christ, one another. The very picture of the Lord's Supper in the unity of the body was being observed in a hypocritical manner because there was unresolved sin in the body.

In the same way today, we must come together in unity with love for one another as we renew our commitment to one another. We believe one of the best ways to do this is by reading our Covenant regularly to God and to one another. In this way we are reminded of what a body should be and we are more equipped to examine ourselves. By way of application, let's read it together.

3. The Lord's Supper is a renewal to Christ's Mission.

Look at 1 Cor. 11:26. It says, "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**" We proclaim the death of our Lord to ourselves and to the world till He comes. As we take the Lord's Supper we are reminded of our mission to go and tell the world that Salvation can only be found in Christ.

The phrase "till He comes" also reminds us that there is a limitation on the Lord's Supper. It is a rehearsal and foretaste of the banquet we will have face to face with our Messiah at the marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). With this hope in sight, we renew our commitment to proclaim Christ's death until faith becomes sight and remembrance becomes reality.

The Lord's Supper looks back to the past in remembrance (the death of Christ). It looks around in the present to the fellowship we experience with Christ and the body of believers. Finally, it looks ahead to the consummation, when Christ returns.