

“Basic Biblical Beliefs Series: “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper”

2017: The Reflection Year Series

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-31 (NIV)

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.

Subject Question: What three acts did the Apostle Paul teach the believers in the church at Corinth they were called to participate in, when observing the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper?

Compliment answer: An Act of Remembrance (Vs.23-25), An Act of Celebration (Vs.26), and An Act of Worship (Vs.27-31).

Big Idea: The three acts the Apostle Paul taught the believers in the church at Corinth they were called to participate in when observing the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are: An act of Remembrance (Vs.23-25), An act of Celebration (Vs.26), and An act of Worship (Vs.27-31).

Homiletical Idea: “I see God’s Persistence”

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand the uniqueness and calling God issues to each one of us individually every time we collectively participate in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Introduction: There are 4 basic views of the Lord's Supper: Transubstantiation (Roman Catholic), Consubstantiation (Lutheran), Reformed (Presbyterian), and the symbolic or memorial (Baptists). Let's briefly describe each. But let's do so using an example (communion cup). Consider this: the juice and bread is just juice and bread. It has not been set apart or consecrated at this point. Our scripture text today includes the words of institution... *The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* At this point, the bread and wine have been consecrated and we can partake. But what really happened? Theologically, the argument goes on. But I want us to move from what happens horizontally between our ears... how we think about the elements, to consider the vertical, what happens... not to the elements but, between our minds and our hearts, and within our hearts... and that "calling", that individual calling, I believe God whispers to each one of us as we meet, as we pray, as we worship, and as we then enter into the holy space of the communion table and take in Christ, His body broke and His blood shed... for us. Three acts we are each called to, this morning. Let's read our scripture.

(Not much has changed)

Groundwork:

The Three-Fold Meaning of the Lord's Supper

by: Joseph Tkach

Grace Communion International

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of what Jesus did in the past, a symbol of our present relationship with him, and a promise of what he will do in the future. Let's survey these three aspects.

Memorials of Jesus' death on the cross

On the evening he was betrayed, while Jesus was eating a meal with his disciples, he took some bread and said, "This is my body given for you; do this

in remembrance of me” ([Luke 22:19](#)). When we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we each eat a small piece of bread in remembrance of Jesus.

“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (verse 20). When we drink a small amount of wine (or grape juice) at the Lord’s Supper, we remember that Jesus’ blood was shed for us, and that his blood inaugurated the new covenant. Just as the old covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of blood, the new covenant was established by Jesus’ blood ([Hebrews 9:18-28](#)).

Paul said, *“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”* ([1 Corinthians 11:26](#)). The Lord’s Supper looks back to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Is Jesus’ death a good thing, or a bad thing? There are some very sorrowful aspects to his death, but the bigger picture is that his death is wonderful news for all of us. Jesus is glad that he did it. It shows how much God loves us—so much that he sent his Son to die for us, so that our sins would be forgiven and we may live forever with him.

The death of Jesus is a tremendous gift to us. It is precious. When we are given a gift of great value, a gift that involved personal sacrifice for us, how should we receive it? With mourning and regret at the sacrifice? No, that is not what the giver wants. Rather, we should receive it with great gratitude, as an expression of great love. If we have tears, they should be tears of joy.

So the Lord’s Supper, although a memorial of a death, is not a funeral, as if Jesus were still dead. Rather, we observe this memorial knowing that death held Jesus only three days—knowing that death will not hold us forever, either. We rejoice that Jesus has conquered death, and has set free all who were enslaved by a fear of death ([Hebrews 2:14-15](#)). We can remember Jesus’ death with the happy knowledge that he has triumphed over sin and death! As Jesus predicted, our mourning has turned into joy ([John 16:20](#)). Coming to the Lord’s Table and having communion should be a celebration, not a funeral.

The ancient Israelites looked back to the Passover events as the defining moment in their history, when their identity as a nation began. That was when they escaped death and slavery through the intervention of God and they were freed to serve the Lord. In the church, we look back to the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as the defining moment in our history.

That is how we escape death and the slavery of sin, and that is how we are freed to serve the Lord. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of this defining moment in our history.

Our present relationship with Jesus Christ

The crucifixion of Jesus has a continuing significance to all who have taken up a cross to follow him. We continue to participate in his death and in the new covenant because we participate in his life. Paul wrote, *"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?"* (1 [Corinthians 10:16](#)). In the Lord's Supper, we show that we share in Jesus Christ. We commune with him. We are united in him.

The New Testament speaks of our sharing with Jesus in several ways. We share in his crucifixion ([Galatians 2:20](#); [Colossians 2:20](#)), death ([Romans 6:4](#)), resurrection ([Ephesians 2:6](#); [Colossians 2:13](#); [3:1](#)) and life ([Galatians 2:20](#)). Our lives are in him, and he is in us. The Lord's Supper pictures this spiritual reality. John 6 conveys a similar idea. After Jesus proclaimed himself to be the "bread of life," he said, *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* (verse 54). Our spiritual food is in Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper pictures this ongoing truth. *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him"* (verse 56). We show that we live in Christ, and he lives in us.

So the Lord's Supper helps us look upward, to Christ, and be mindful that true life can only be in him and with him. When we are aware that Jesus lives in us, we also pause to think what kind of home we are giving him. Before he came into our lives, we were habitations of sin. Jesus knew that before he even knocked on the door of our lives. He wants to get in so he can start cleaning things up. But when Jesus knocks, many people try to do a quick tidy-up before they open the door. However, we are humanly unable to cleanse our sins—the most we can do is hide them in the closet.

So we hide our sins in the closet, and invite Jesus into the living room. Eventually we let him into the kitchen, and then the hallway, and then a bedroom. It is a gradual process. Eventually Jesus gets to the closet where our worst sins are hidden, and he cleans them, too. Year by year, as we grow in

spiritual maturity, we surrender more of our lives to our Savior. We let him live in us.

It is a process, and the Lord's Supper plays a role in this process. Paul wrote, *"Everyone should take a careful look at themselves before they eat the bread and drink from the cup"* (1 Corinthians 11:28). Every time we participate, we should be mindful of the great meaning involved in this ceremony. When we examine ourselves, we often find sin. This is normal—it is not a reason to avoid the Lord's Supper. It is a reminder that we need Jesus in our lives. Only he can take our sins away.

Paul criticized the Corinthian Christians for their manner of observing the Lord's Supper. The wealthy members were coming first, eating a great meal and getting drunk. The poor members came last, still hungry. The wealthy were not sharing with the poor (verses 20-22). They were not really sharing in the life of Christ, for they were not doing what he would do. They did not understand what it means to be members of the body of Christ, and that members have responsibilities toward one another.

As we examine ourselves, we need to look around to see whether we are treating one another in the way that Jesus commanded. If you are united with Christ and I am united to Christ, then we are united to each other. So the Lord's Supper, by picturing our participation in Christ, also pictures our participation (other translations may say communion or sharing or fellowship) with each other. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:17, *"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf."* By participating together in the Lord's Supper, we picture the fact that we are one body in Christ, one with each other, with responsibilities toward one another.

At Jesus' last meal with his disciples, Jesus pictured the life of God's kingdom by washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-15). When Peter protested, Jesus said it was necessary that he wash his feet. The Christian life involves both serving and being served.

Reminds us of Jesus' return

Jesus said he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until he came in the fullness of the kingdom (Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:18; Mark 14:25). Whenever we participate, we are reminded of Jesus' promise. There will be a great messianic

“banquet,” a “wedding supper” of celebration. The bread and wine are miniature rehearsals of what will be the greatest victory celebration in all history. Paul wrote that “*Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26). We know that he will come again.

The Lord’s Supper is rich in meaning. That is why it has been a prominent part of the Christian tradition throughout the centuries. Sometimes it has been allowed to become a lifeless ritual, done more out of habit than with meaning. When a ritual loses meaning, some people overreact by stopping the ritual entirely. The better response is to restore the meaning. That’s why it is helpful for us to review the meaning of our custom.--

The Battle for the Table

by R.C. Sproul

There have been centuries of debate over the church’s understanding of the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Before we survey the critical issues involved, we need to understand that the main reason why the argument continues, and at times becomes fierce, is because the church understands the vital importance of this sacrament in its life and worship.

The fundamental disagreement over the Lord’s Supper focuses on four distinct views. These views include: first, the view of transubstantiation articulated by the Roman Catholic communion; second, the doctrine of consubstantiation articulated by the Lutheran community (We must note, however, that the word *consubstantiation*, though it is used widely in theological circles to describe the Lutheran view, is not a term that the Lutherans tend to embrace, and so we should honor their attempt to disavow this particular word.); third, the Reformed and Anglican affirmation of the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper; and fourth, the memorial-sign view of the sacrament espoused by Ulrich Zwingli and by the majority of those in the Baptist communities. It is important to note at this point that there is major agreement among Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and the Reformed that Christ is truly

present in the Lord's Supper. They all go beyond the view of the Supper as a bare sign or memorial, as espoused by many evangelicals.

The debate among Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed people is one that focuses on the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. At the bottom, this debate is not so much sacramental as it is christological.

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has articulated her view of the Lord's Supper in terms of the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine was clearly affirmed by the Ecumenical Council of Trent in the sixteenth century and was reaffirmed as recently as the papal encyclical issued by Paul VI in 1965, entitled *Mysterium Fide*. Transubstantiation uses language that was borrowed from the philosopher Aristotle. In defining the nature of objects in the world, Aristotle distinguished between the "essence," or "substance," of an object and its external, perceivable qualities that he called the "accidens." Therefore, Aristotle distinguished between substance and accidens of all beings in the created world. By use of this terminology, the Roman Catholic Church teaches the miracle of the Mass, in which the substance of the bread and wine that is used in the Lord's Supper is miraculously changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ.

This miracle, however, contains two aspects. While the substance of the bread and wine are changed to the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless, the accidens of bread and wine remain the same. That is, before the miracle occurs, the bread and wine look like bread and wine, taste like bread and wine, and feel like bread and wine. After the miracle of their transformation occurs, they still look like bread and wine, feel like bread and wine, and taste like bread and wine. That is because after the miracle occurs, the substance of bread and wine has changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, while the accidens of bread and wine remain. Therefore the miracle is twofold. For Rome there is the substance of one thing with the accidens of another, and the accidens of another thing with the substance of something else.

Interestingly, last century a debate erupted over a similar point, particularly in Holland among the Dutch Catholics. They attempted to get beyond the language of Aristotle and keep the idea of the miracle intact without being tied

to the philosophical formulation of Aristotelian terms. Edward Schillebeeckx, as well as the writers of the Dutch Catechism, adopted a view called “transignification,” which they said maintained the reality of the real presence of Christ without the formulation of Trent. Paul VI responded to this in *Mysterium Fide* (1965) by insisting that not only is the church committed to the substance of the doctrine of transubstantiation, but it is committed to the formulation of it as well.

Martin Luther saw a frivolous use of the word *miracle* in Rome’s understanding of transubstantiation and said that it is not necessary to talk about the substance of one and the accidents of another when we can just affirm the true corporeal presence of Christ “in, under, and with” the elements of bread and wine. Luther didn’t use the word *consubstantiation*. It was the Reformed church’s attempt to faithfully articulate Luther’s view by using the term *consubstantiation*, which means that Christ is substantively present with the substantive presence of bread and wine. In both the Roman and Lutheran view of the matter, for Christ to be present in His human nature in more than one place at the same time requires that some kind of communication of divine attributes takes place between God and the human Jesus. This was the chief objection that Calvin and the other Reformers launched against both Luther and Rome, because they saw in it a violation of the Council of Chalcedon, which taught that the two natures of Christ are united without confusion or without mixture. For Jesus in His human nature, to which His body certainly belongs, to be present at more than one place at the same time would require the deification of His body, which the Reformers saw as a thinly veiled Monophysite heresy.

John Calvin insisted, as did the Anglicans, on the true presence of Christ, but he also insisted that the presence of Christ is through His divine nature. His human nature is no longer present with us. It is in heaven at the right hand of God. We still are able to commune with the human nature of Christ by means of our communion with the divine nature, which does indeed remain united to the human nature. But that human nature remains localized in heaven. In the debate, Calvin fought a war on two fronts. On the one hand, in dealing with the

Lutherans and the Roman Catholics, he refused to use the term *substance* with respect to the presence of Jesus in the sacrament. But over against those disciples of Zwingli, who wanted to reduce the sacrament to a mere symbol and memorial, Calvin insisted upon the term *substance*. Here the term *substance* had two different nuances. With respect to Luther and Rome, the term *substance* meant “corporeal” or “physical.” With respect to the debate with Zwingli, Calvin used the term *substance* as a synonym for “real” or “true.”

In addition to this aspect of the controversy, the Reformation theologians also rejected Rome’s notion that in the Lord’s Supper a true sacrifice of Christ is offered to God. Catholicism says that though this sacrifice is not bloody, it nevertheless is a real sacrifice (the Council of Trent used the word *sacrificium*). In this understanding, the Reformers saw a violation of the once-for-all offering of Christ on the cross.

The debate goes on, as the church tries to plumb the depths and the riches of this sacrament that was instituted by Jesus and practiced on a regular basis in the primitive Christian church, and this debate has survived even to our day.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

11:23-34 The apostle describes the sacred ordinance, of which he had the knowledge by revelation from Christ. As to the visible signs, these are the bread and wine. What is eaten is called bread, though at the same time it is said to be the body of the Lord, plainly showing that the apostle did not mean that the bread was changed into flesh. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bid them all drink of the cup, ch. Mt 26:27, as if he would, by this expression, provide against any believer being deprived of the cup. The things signified by these outward signs, are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice. Our Savior’s actions were, taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving both the one and the other. The actions of the communicants were, to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and to do both in remembrance of Christ. But the outward acts are not the whole, or the principal part, of what is to be done at this holy ordinance. Those who partake

of it, are to take him as their Lord and Life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. Here is an account of the ends of this ordinance. It is to be done in remembrance of Christ, to keep fresh in our minds his dying for us, as well as to remember Christ pleading for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. It is not merely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered; but to celebrate his grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and plead it as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. The Lord's supper is not an ordinance to be observed merely for a time, but to be continued. The apostle lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving it with an unsuitable temper of mind; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while professing to renew and confirm the covenant with God. No doubt such incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to spiritual judgements. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance. The Holy Spirit never caused this scripture to be written to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this use of it. The apostle was addressing Christians, and warning them to beware of the temporal judgements with which God chastised his offending servants. And in the midst of judgement, God remembers mercy: he many times punishes those whom he loves. It is better to bear trouble in this world, than to be miserable for ever. The apostle points out the duty of those who come to the Lord's Table. Self-examination is necessary to right attendance at this holy ordinance. If we would thoroughly search ourselves, to condemn and set right what we find wrong, we should stop Divine judgements. The apostle closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which the Corinthians were guilty at the Lord's table. Let all look to it, that they do not come together to God's worship, so as to provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves.

(Not much has changed)

- A. An Act of Remembrance (Vs.23-25).²³ *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*²⁵ *In the same way,*

after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

- B. The heart of the matter is this: there came a time in human history that God looked at His most beloved creation and with sadness mixed with determination and I’m sure, in a muttered voice said, “My children have lost their way...” “They only know about me, but they don’t know me.” “They want to experience the love that they hope I have for them, but all they can perceive is my disappointment with them.” “I long for them to walk with me... but sadly, they only walk, in fear of me...” “I long for them to be with me someday when their time on earth is finished... but for most that thought is not a certainty, and for many it’s simply a pipe-dream.” THIS WILL NOT DO.
- C. The Father’s voice rose: “Son... My beloved Son, the One whom I cherish with all my heart... for them will you go...? For Me, will you give them hope?” “ For them will you take on flesh and blood and emotions and feelings, and will you walk the dreary but necessary of paths and teach them about me, my love for them, my plans for them... my hope...?” “And will you walk the darkest of trails and experience what we have never known, but what they fear the most... a death... for them? For Me?” “Will you Son, love them as I have always loved you? “In my heart I want you to say NO... But for them... For those whom you will call your true brothers and sisters... Yes?...”
- D. When we remember the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for us, we also cannot forget the Father’s sacrifice of Christ sacrifice for us. Perhaps these thoughts were o the mind of Christ when He said, “Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down His life for His friends...” or as it turned out, one to lay down His life for you and me. Tough it cost God and Christ dearly, for us we now realize the privilege of His friendship, His acceptance, His love. The cup, the wine, the covenant, the reaching out of the Divine to the Human... the willingness... every time we come to this sacred table, we are called to remember... An Act of Remembrance.
(Not much has changed)
- A. An Act of Celebration (Vs.26).²⁶ *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*
- B. However, and with God there is always a however, we must always keep in mind that beyond the Eerie and cruel cross lay the empty and

unoccupied tomb. But, hear me this morning, the tomb was and is empty. The sacrifice is done! Much to Satan's chagrin, His slimy hand of death could not hold the Living, the Triumphant Christ, no, our Triumphant Christ, who on that third day... repeated what He had proclaimed 3 days earlier from the cross: IT IS FINISHED... now however, not with a subdued whisper of a totally spent Savior, but with a Triumphant Halleluiah from a Risen King: IT IS FINISHED, IT IS FINISHED! The veil of separation has been rent asunder, torn in half and ripped down. Finally we can see and are invited to come near the heart of the Eternal, giving, generous and O so loving God: The God of creation whom we in our own hearts have always secretly longed to believe in... The God of Salvation whom we always wanted to have hope in. The God whose hand we always have desperately sought to reach out to and find.

- C. Finally the way back to God has been provided. Finally, death no longer has to be feared. Finally, through all of our ups and downs in life we can know that behind them all stands a Deity, Good Deity, that truly cares, who truly loves, who truly, because of the Cross can be found.
- D. That my friend is something to celebrate. Think of the Father's reunion and celebration when Jesus finally walked once again through the gates of heaven; Into the waiting and loving Father's arms. With nailed pierced hands I'm sure He held on tight to His Dearest Da, His adored Abba. O the joy that must have been there as angels gathered and tears of joy flowed freely. What is sobering is the reality that the same welcome awaits you and me... When we can finally say our —it is finished; my task on earth is done. Every time we break the bread there is within our souls and thrill that of the chains that once held us are now broken. Every time we drink of the wine, we celebrate the intoxicating reality that for us, for you, for me, God did what He so desperately desired to do so that **we** may have the privilege of knowing and walking with the Father who loves us and the Savior who died, who lives, who loves, us. And if that is not An Act of Celebration I don't know what is.

- A. An Act of Worship (Vs.27-31). *²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.*
- B. The Lord's Supper: An Act of Remembrance, An Act of Celebration, An Act of Worship. There is a reality that surrounds this table. And it's always an expression that is set deep in our individual hearts. We either hold the bread or grasp the cup with a heart that cries out, Amen, thank you! Or our heart retreats and fearfully states the reality, O ME
- C. These last few verses aren't so much a warning to not handle the elements of bread and wine in a way that somehow is beneath their holy state of sanctification as they are a warning to not handle your own life in such a way that you still consider yourself as your own savior, who'll take your chances that your good deeds will someday outweigh your bad ones and that you deserve to somehow spend eternity in heaven.
- D. Let me say this with all the frankness that these last words hint at, if you are still you own savior; if you have not come to the place where you sense a need to submit your life, your total life and heart to God. If you are basically content with what you've done in the strength of your own body and the blood and tears you have spent to be a good person, then these elements are not for you. They are not yours. But ... But... they can be. They were meant for you. They have always and will always be meant for you. Won't you join the celebration?