

I CORINTHIANS 10:14-21
PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S TABLE

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

The Savior's last meal with His disciples was a very special one. They gathered together, a close-knit group, to celebrate Passover, which, as God first commanded in Egypt, was for each family according to their household. Between Jesus and His disciples there was a sharing, a oneness. During the Passover meal Jesus magnified that oneness, when He instituted, started, the Sacrament of Holy Communion. That word "communion" means partnership, sharing, oneness. It is similar to the word "community"—a location where people live together, having things "in common." "Common" is from Latin for "with." On the night of His last meal with them, Jesus instituted a very special celebration of oneness, a meal to bring His own together in the closest of ways.

This is the "Communion" that Paul discusses in our text. He has been talking about the Christian life in general and the constant struggle to avoid serving self, and making self the center of life and of dealing with others. Paul says Christian life is like running a race—the goal is not "style points" in the eyes of others, but winning the prize. Christian life focuses the eyes on eternal life in heaven through Jesus. Paul also describes Christian life as a boxer. (The Greek games, our Olympics today, were well known even then.) Paul says that he doesn't just shadow box in his Christian life, merely jabbing at the air, but he punches himself "under the eye" to keep his body, his sinful flesh, in subjection, lest he, the apostle, be drawn away and lost. Would that be possible? He directed his readers to the Old Testament. The people of Israel had every blessing from God as they exited Egypt for the Promised Land. Christ was with them supplying miraculous food and water, not just for the body, but also for the soul. Yet many did not trust Him, were more interested in fleshly things, idol worship, adultery, seeing how far they could push God, grumbling against Him. Therefore, many of them did not reach the Promised Land, but fell in the desert!

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. He says, Figure it out yourself. Can you play with idolatry or other sin and still be loyal to God, still be at one with God, still be in communion with God? The answer is an obvious, No. Which leads Paul directly into his next item for Christian life—the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. There are several points here. Let us look closely. **FIRST: The cup of blessing which we bless.** From reading outside of the Bible, the Passover meal included a passing of three cups of wine. The third cup was called "the cup of blessing." This is the cup of which Luke writes, "Likewise He also took the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). This the "cup of blessing" had a special blessing spoken over it by Jesus. The same was true of the bread. "Jesus took bread, blessed, and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, Take, eat, this is My body" (Matthew 26:26).

The Bible does not record what those words of special blessing were. Yet those words of special blessing were the power not only that evening, but ever after in celebrating this special Supper. At Communion we do not speak those original words of blessing for they are unknown. We speak words of "consecration"; that is, not words by which we bring about the blessed sharing, but by which we publicly declare that we are celebrating the Sacrament which Jesus declared and empowered at that first Lord's Supper.. Such "consecration" is necessary. Would we have the Lord's Supper if we just placed unleavened bread and grape wine on the altar and distributed it, not in any way tying it to that one command, blessing, and institution of Jesus? No.

SECONDLY : , . . . *Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? . . . Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* There is a definite sharing, a oneness, between the cup of wine and the blood of Jesus, and the unleavened bread and the body of Jesus. The word “communion” says so.. Although our “Reformed-theology” friends say the wine symbolizes the blood, and the bread symbolizes the body, it is just not the case. The wine is “the communion of the blood.” The bread is the “communion of the body.” All four are there. If it’s only symbolical, then just bread and wine and no sharing, oneness, “communion,” at all. Jesus said “is”—not “represents” or “symbolizes.” On the other hand, our “Catholic-theology” friends say, the wine and the bread, although still appearing as wine and bread, are gone, transubstantiated--changed into—only blood and only body. With such an understanding the body and blood of Communion are worshiped or “adored.” They are offered to God as an additional “unbloody” sacrifice for sin! Once again however, “communion” means the wine and the bread are still there. Otherwise the term “communion” would be a mistake, and Paul could not say, The cup is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread is a communion of the body of Christ.” All four “elements,” are present. It is a miraculous circumstance which I can neither understand nor explain—but when one receives the sacrament of Holy Communion one receives--with the mouth—four things: true bread and wine, in a natural way; but true body and blood in a miraculous way.

THIRDLY: *For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.* “We all partake of that one bread.” The celebration of Holy Communion involves distributing these elements to the communicants, not just leaving them on the altar as a visible sign. It involves the communicants partaking—eating and drinking them, as the Lord commanded. They are not just to be put in your pocket, or a baggie, or a jar to be taken home and set on your shelf as some sort of “presence of Jesus” in your home. It is to be eaten and drunk—taken into self—as a very personal and visible assurance that the Son of God died for you. In Him you, even you, are forgiven, declared sinless before God—all for Jesus sake. A new lease on life and a breath of fresh air are yours. “God accepts me!”

In our text Paul goes back to the Old Testament Israelites. *Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?* It was easily understood that those who ate of the sacrifices of an altar were doing so as bonded to, in fellowship with, the Lord. The same then was true if one ate from an idol altar! What sort of bond was that? What “communion” was such action establishing? Definitely something away from God. Paul explains that it’s not that the image itself was somehow a supernatural deity, nor was the food offered there and eaten somehow tainted and infected by the stone, wood, gold, silver image. *What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?* No. The issue was, “Who is really behind any and all such false worship and contradiction of God’s Truth, teaching a teaching which does not proclaim sin and forgiveness of sin in Christ?” Who was behind it?” *The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God.* Behind these altars are the devil and all his demons. Whether one turns away from God a lot or a little, one turns to line up with the devil—maybe not to immediate destruction, but on that road. *I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.*

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Unity with the Lord does not allow unity or communion with demons. Whatever in life leads you to serve self, or really Satan, because it is pleasing to you and does not follow the Truth of the Lord and His Son is disloyalty to the Lord and dangerous. So, what is it that draws you into a fellowship contrary to God? Misusing God’s name, mocking the God-given gifts of personal and honorable body parts, abusing alcohol with drunkenness, abusing harmful substances and ingesting them into the body for fun, supporting the practices and standards of man-made morals? These and more are from Satan, not from God! Stay away.

Even more particular. What about receiving Communion with a congregation and thus with its larger church body to which the congregation pledges agreement? Can one hope to receive a blessing when communing with those who, for example, say, the bread and wine only represent and symbolize the body and blood, or only body and blood are present to be offered as another sacrifice for sin? Can one commune at the same altar with a group that says the Bible’s morality is no longer applicable, that the words of the Bible have to be sorted out for Truth, that it’s ok to have different views on Bible teaching and doctrine, since God doesn’t care? Punch your body under the eye and serve the Lord in full! In Jesus the Lord of Truth is full fellowship with the forgiving Father, full blessings leading you each day, and full joy in heaven forever. His Supper is a precious foretaste and guarantee of that bliss and oneness and fellowship. Do not forsake oneness and communion with the Lord!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---