

COMMUNION

first The Bread, and then The Cup

Have you ever sat and pondered about why Jesus broke and ate the bread *before* He drank of the cup? And, why He, not just once, but twice, directed that we do this “in remembrance of me”? It must have been of great importance for Him to have addressed it twice. The significance was revealed to the Apostle Paul and is conveyed in 1 Corinthians 11, as follows:

²³ ¶ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: ²⁴ And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

²⁵ 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 ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. ²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

²⁷ ¶ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. ²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this cause many *are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

As we come before the Lord in the observance of communion, in celebration and worship of His holiness, grace and mercy, we call to remembrance the blood that He shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins¹. We take time to prepare our hearts to honor His sacrifice for it was with His own blood that He entered once into the holy place to obtain eternal redemption for us². And we know that the life of the flesh is in the blood³ and without the shedding of blood, there is no remission⁴. The cup is a visual depiction of the crucifixion because He was hung on a tree for the forgiveness of our sin⁵ and made full payment for our iniquities with His own blood. And because of His sacrifice, He declared that we should drink of the cup “in remembrance of me”⁶.

But let us take a moment and explore the first component in the communion observation, the breaking of bread, lest we fail to adequately recognize and praise Him for all of His blessings. The psalmist wrote, “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases...*” Psalm 103:2-3. Jesus paid a great and precious price for both the forgiveness of our sin, but also for the healing of our body. He poured out His soul unto death⁷, and yielded in silence to an indescribable scourging whereby he was cruelly beaten and whipped to such a degree that his appearance was more disfigured and ravaged than that of any other man⁸. It was so horrible, that Pilate wrote an inscription in Hebrew, Greek and Latin⁹ to identify Him as “JESUS OF NAZARETH”. The scourging occurred first, before He was condemned to die¹⁰, and occurred for the express purpose of the healing of our body. The word says “with His stripes we are healed”¹¹. It is for this reason that He also declared that we should take and eat of the bread in remembrance of Him, and the reason that He partook of the bread *before* the cup. The bread is a visual depiction of the scourging which occurred first and is to be appropriately and distinctly celebrated in honor of Him.

But let us look even more closely at the warning written by the Apostle Paul concerning the holy sacrament which includes a universal message that we should take great care to understand.

²⁷ ¶ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. ²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. ³³ ¶ Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. ³⁴ And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Paul wrote a warning to the church at Corinth for partaking of communion in a profane manner, by minimizing the significance of the observance by making no difference between the holy partaking of His body and blood and that of taking of common food, but setting them both on the same level. He directed them that "*if any man hunger, let him eat at home*"¹² because they were treating the observance as if they counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing¹³. The warning is stated very clearly and it is of utmost importance that Paul's revelation be shared with the flock of Jesus Christ prior to partaking of communion. However, it is not the warning that we address here, but the opposite. If the failure to observe the Lord's body brings upon weakness and sickness, or worse, then how much more will the respectful, reverential recognition of all the benefits which flow from His sacrifice and death bring about healing to our physical body?

Notice the way in which the Holy Spirit directed the wording of this passage. It says,

²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

It says they failed to discern the Lord's body – His body that was specifically broken for our healing. It was their failure to reverently discern His body that many were weak and sickly. So, if we were to appropriately discern His body that was broken for our healing, and comprehend the depths of His sacrifice for our healing, and learn of His great and precious promises regarding the healing of our body, how much more might we observe the fulfillment of His gift to us?

We, the body of Christ, rejoice at the testimonies of men, women and children who are healed while partaking of the holy sacrament; they cannot be easily dismissed. For it is when the breaking of the bread and the significance of His scourging has been taught and received into the hearts of believers that the great Light comes upon them and their faith is increased. They receive the truth of the gospel and the blessing that He himself bestows upon those who believe and honor the purpose of the celebration and who come to Him for healing in their time of need. May we each stop and ponder all of His blessings today as well as each and every time we come to the communion table in remembrance of Him.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we boldly come before your throne of grace and ask that the truth of your glorious gospel be revealed unto the reader's heart that they may receive every precious gift that your body and blood purchased on their behalf. As you directed in your Word, in the name of Jesus Christ, we call forth complete healing of their body that they arise totally free from any affliction or infirmity, pain or suffering to the honor and praise of your most precious son, Jesus Christ.

KJV Scripture References:

- ¹ **Matthew 26:28** For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.
- ² **Hebrews 9:12** Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.
- ³ **Leviticus 17:11** For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.
- ⁴ **Hebrews 9:22** And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.
- ⁵ **Acts 5:30** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. ³¹ Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.
- ⁶ **1 Corinthians 11:25** 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 ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.
- ⁷ **Isaiah 53:12** Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.
- ⁸ **Isaiah 52:14** As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:
- ⁹ **John 19:19** And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.
- ¹⁰ **John 19:1** ¶ Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. **John 19:4** Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. **John 19:16** Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led *him* away.
- ¹¹ **Isaiah 53:5** But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
- ¹² **1 Corinthians 11:34** And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.
- ¹³ **Hebrews 10:29** Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?