

The Lord's Supper (7th)

(Today we will continue discussing some of the benefits as listed in the confessions where both Protestants and Baptists agree.)

We ended our previous podcast discussing that the Lord's Supper is "a bond and pledge of the believer's communion with each other." While the meal is to focus on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in remembrance of Him, it is not limited to that. I believe that many, if not most, people only think of the Lord's Supper as something that is private between the believer and Christ. In our emotional age when religion is focused on feelings and excitements, the sermons around the Lord's Supper are often centered and directed to the individual experience and communion with Christ. We do not want to lose sight of the importance of having a true and real communion in the death of Christ, but neither are we to ignore the communion and fellowship of the saints—the membership of the congregation. This is vital to Christianity and is the heart and soul of salvation. I John 4:7-8 says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Again, in verses twenty and twenty-one John states, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." As we know, many other such passages could be quoted, but these are clear and prove that unless we have love and fellowship (communion) with our fellow believers we do not have communion with the Lord. There is no option. Our partaking of the Lord's Supper involves partaking (fellowshipping) with fellow believers in the congregation of the Lord. As we noted before, this communion of the saints may extend beyond the congregation, but it is obvious that if this love and fellowship is not a living force within the congregation it likely does not expand outside the assembly.

The Lord admonished the congregation at Corinth for the divisions (heresies) that were among them. He further said that because of the factions within the congregation they scripturally could not be partaking of the Lord's Supper. I Corinthians 11:20 says, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." The general consensus of the commentators is that the verse is saying that they could not eat the supper as long as they were divided. Obviously, if all of the members were in fellowship with each other and likeminded in their love for one another these divisions (heresies) would not have been in the congregation at Corinth.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 is another passage that teaches about the fellowship of the congregation and its connection to the Lord's Supper. It says, "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 being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." While we are to remember the broken body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the passages also states that "we being many are one bread, and one body." Again, the commentators generally agree that this is referring to congregational oneness. Listen to the words of John Gill concerning this: "The several members of the church of Christ; particular believers are indeed many, considered in themselves, in their own persons; yet by virtue of their union to Christ, which is manifested by their communion with him, they are one bread with him, the bread of life, and one body with his, signified by the bread; they are of one and the same mass and lump, they are incorporated together, they are flesh of his flesh, and one spirit with him: or they are one bread and body among themselves; as bread consists of many grains of corn which have been ground and kneaded together, and make up one loaf; and as the members of an human body are many, and make up one body; so believers, though they are many, yet are one body, of which Christ is the head; one in union with him and one another, and one in their communion together at the Lord's table." Additionally, in I Corinthians 12:27, we are told that the congregation at Corinth was "the body of

Christ.” Too often preachers today only talk of the body of Christ as referring to all of the elect of God, or all of the believers currently alive, or some other concept of like nature that is separate and apart from the individual congregation. Some say that the individual congregations are a part of the body of Christ, but the Scriptures plainly teach that a New Testament congregation is “the body of Christ.” Actually, in the Greek text, the definite article “the” is not there and it could be read “a body of Christ.” In other words, each New Testament congregation is a body of Christ in and of itself and Christ is the Head of that congregation as the husband is the head of the wife. This union and fellowship among the members are to be realized not only daily, but it should be realized and considered when the congregation is partaking of this meal with the Lord and each other. In fact, as we noted earlier, unless such a communion and fellowship exists among the membership, it matters not how often the bread and wine are administered to the congregation, there is no fellowship or communion with the Lord. Therefore, when a person misses the Lord’s Supper (unless providentially hindered) he is not only saying that he does not desire to fellowship with the Lord, but he is equally affirming his disregard for the congregation as a whole and the individual member in particular.

Lastly, the sixth benefit of the Lord’s Supper is that “worthy receivers ... spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.” It is likely that the writers of the confessions were referring to the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Christ, while consubstantiation is the Lutheran doctrine that the body and blood of Christ comes along and with the bread and wine. Since the Protestants as a whole did not retain these views, we will not show the fallacy of these beliefs. Our purpose is to study somewhat of the positive benefits of partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

Obviously, to receive and feed on Christ crucified and the benefits of His death are of a spiritual nature. That which is received is received in the soul. It is not something that necessarily edifies the human emotions and feelings of the recipient. It is of a deeper level. The Spirit of the Lord continually abides in the believer and he (the believer) does not *feel* anything going on inside of him on a daily basis. The reality of the indwelling of the Spirit of God is not on a natural or emotional level. The reality of the Spirit indwelling in the believer is the truth of the Scriptures. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you,” John 14:15-18. By this we know that the Lord Jesus, Himself, equally dwells in the believer by the operation of the Holy Spirit. But this not all, the Father, too, indwells in the believer. “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” John 14:23. Therefore, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—indwells the believer. This is true whether the believer “feels” it or not. It is not a matter of feeling or human emotions; it is a matter of the truth of the Scriptures. Naturally, the evidence of this is how the believer is living; it is not how the believer is feeling or if some emotional sensation is pulsating through the cells or feelings of the person. Often people are confused because they have the idea that if they are not having some emotional experience which they judge to be caused by God then they are not fellowshiping the Lord. Yes, the believer does have and know something that is foreign to the natural man. He has fellowship with the Lord. For example, a natural man can read the Scriptures, know the meaning of the words, understand the principles of the various doctrines, and even argue the logic of the teachings of the Bible. On the other hand, when the believer reads and studies the Bible it speaks to his soul. There is something different going on in and with him. There is life (as it were) in what he reads. At times his spirit is lifted out of despondency while at other times he is condemned. In other words, the Scriptures speak to him. The Word of God is alive to and in

him. His human emotions may or may not be affected, but his soul is affected and he is generally drawn closer to the Lord and enjoys fellowship with His Savior and Master.

I trust by this you are blessed to see the difference between human emotions and that of the soul partaking of the things of God. We must realize and know somewhat of the distinction between that of the natural flesh and that of the Spirit of God. Paul discussed this in Romans chapter seven. He spoke of the natural man and spiritual man. The spiritual man delights “in the law of God after the inward man” while in his flesh (i.e., in the natural man) dwells “no good thing.” Study Rm. 7:14-23.

Our time is up for today, but the Lord willing we will continue discussing this sixth and final point of the benefits of partaking of the Lord’s Supper. However, I believe it was important to try to make the distinction between soul fellowship with the Lord and human emotions. It is important that we understand the abiding presence of the Lord and that soul fellowship provides an abiding peace and consolation to the soul of the believer that the world does not know. As long as people are looking and striving for something to pacify the emotions and feelings they will never know contentment and satisfaction in life.