

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

# Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #36, Lord's Day 28*

## The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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Bartel Elshout is pastor of the Kalamazoo Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He previously served as pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregations of Jordan (Ontario), Chilliwack (British Columbia), and Hull (Iowa). He continues to serve as a part-time instructor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He previously served as the founding principal of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School in Pompton Plains, New Jersey and as an evangelist in Denver, Colorado. He is also the translator of Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, *The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death* by Theodorus van der Groe, and Alexander Comrie's *The Distinctive Marks of Saving Faith*. He was previously married to his late wife, Joan, with whom he has two children, David and Sarah, and seven grandchildren. He is presently married to Clarice.

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### **Introduction and Review**

Beloved congregation, this morning, we again had the privilege of having one of the sacraments administered. We've been considering the doctrine of the sacraments, also by way of our Heidelberg Catechism. And in God's Providence, it so happens that Lord's Day 28, which is the first of three Lord's Days, is at the point of being called upon to be expounded for us, and so very fitting for this hour of reflection.

The sacraments—remember, boys and girls, the sacraments, what are they? They are God's visual aids. They are means by which God, in a very special way, wants to teach us the essential truths of the gospel. And so, the signs of the sacraments—the water of baptism, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper—are visible signs of invisible truths. And so, the sacraments are a special gift of God to his church to strengthen our faith, which so often is weak and needs to be strengthened. And so, in the sacraments, Christ, in a very special way, draws near to us. As I have said before, quoting the Puritans, who were fond of saying that in the sacraments, we do not get a different Christ, but we get him better. In a very special way, Christ unveils his heart to his people.

And so, Lord's Day 28 will be very suitable to reflect on what transpired this morning. And so, let's turn to our Heidelberg Catechism, and read Lord's Day 28.

Question #75: *How art thou admonished and assured in the Lord's Supper that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?*

The Answer: *Thus: that Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, adding these promises: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me; and further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.*

Question #76: *What is it then to eat the crucified body, and drink the shed blood of Christ?*

Answer: *It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal; but also, besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding “flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone”; and that we live, and are governed forever by one spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.*

Question #77: *Where has Christ promised that He will as certainly feed and nourish believers with His body and blood, as they eat of this broken bread, and drink of this cup?*

Answer: *In the institution of the supper, which is thus expressed: “The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 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. 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 often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”*

*This promise is repeated by the holy Apostle Paul, where he 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.”*

Thus far, the Heidelberg Catechism. And so, this Lord’s Day speaks of *The Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ*. First of all, we will focus on *The Purpose of the Lord’s Supper*. The purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to communicate visibly, to admonish, to instruct us, to seal to us the reality of what Christ has accomplished by his death, symbolized by the broken bread and the shared wine. Secondly, we will focus on *The Partaking of the Lord’s Supper*—what are the benefits that flow from partaking of the Lord’s Supper. And thirdly, *The Promise of the Lord’s Supper*, expressed in Question and Answer #77, in which the Catechism gives us the two fundamental passages of Scripture that address the nature and purpose of the Lord’s Supper. So, *The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ; Its Purpose; Its Partaking; and The Promise of the Lord’s Supper*.

If you were to compare Lord’s Day 26 and Lord’s Day 28, you will notice that they are structured identically. It’s remarkable how identical that structure is, and that’s done purposely, because our forefathers wanted to emphasize the unity of the sacraments. It is true the sacrament of baptism has a different focus than the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The sacrament of baptism focuses on *regeneration*, the work of the Holy Spirit by which spiritual life is granted. Whereas the Lord’s Supper is the sacrament of *edification*, which focuses on how that spiritual life that is wrought by the Holy Spirit, how that spiritual life is sustained and strengthened. But the important part is this, that though there is a difference in focus, yet there is a unity in the sacraments. And so what both sacraments have in common, that *both sacraments are signs and seals of the foundational promises of the gospel*. And so, by means of both sacraments, also by means of baptism, it pleases Christ in a very special way to communicate with his people.

And so, the opening Question of Lord's Day 28 reminds us of the opening Question of Lord's Day 26. Again, a very important Question for us to consider. It says, *How art thou admonished—* that means "How art thou reminded? How art thou instructed—and *assured in the Lord's Supper that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?* And so, what this Question emphasizes is that it's one thing to partake physically of the Lord's Supper. It's another thing to be a partaker of that which the Lord's Supper symbolizes. In other words, the partaking of the Lord's Supper itself will not benefit us. The partaking of the Lord's Supper itself will not save us. No, what matters—and this needs to be emphasized, because throughout my ministry, I have encountered people who pin all their hope on whether they can partake of the Lord's Supper, somehow thinking that, if they can partake of the Lord Supper, that all is well. And congregation, it will only be well with us if we have a true living faith. The sacraments will be of no benefit to us, unless by a true saving faith, we embrace that which is communicated by means of the sacrament, and that is true also for the Lord's Supper.

And so, the Question sets before us this weighty matter. It says, *How art thou—*and again, very, very personal, congregation, *How art thou reminded, instructed, assured that thou art a partake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?* And congregation, let me remind you again, this is a life and death question. Your and my future depends on whether we are partakers of that one sacrifice of Christ; our future depends on whether we have a true saving faith in Christ. And that's why we need to examine ourselves. That's why we, as God's servants, are called to prompt you to engage in honest, biblical, self-examination. Because, let me emphasize, congregation, our attendance at the Lord's Table will not save us. What will save us is whether, by grace, we have put our trust truly in this Lord Jesus Christ. What will save us, if our faith is genuine; if our faith reflects that which the Scriptures teach us about true and saving faith; whether our faith is a faith that is wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; whether that faith is manifested in that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of which the Lord Jesus speaks in the Beatitudes.

And you know, I do hope you recall, from our sermons about the Beatitudes, that that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that hungering and thirsting after Christ is the very essence of spiritual life. The life of the Christian revolves around this hungering and thirsting after Christ, this taking refuge to him. But I want to remind you that that hungering and thirsting is placed in a context, in the context of the first three Beatitudes. In other words, who are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness? Who are they that take refuge to Christ? Who are they that find their only hope and salvation in this precious Lord Jesus Christ? They will always be those who are aware of their spiritual poverty, who grieve over their spiritual poverty, who have learned to humble themselves before God in light of their spiritual poverty, and who, out of that awareness, look outside of themselves and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when I emphasize this, I'm not suggesting that you have to attain to a certain measure of all of these things. I'm not suggesting that being poor in spirit and mourning over your sin qualifies you for Christ. What I wish to emphasize, however, is that the exercise of faith in Christ happens in an experiential context. In other words, those who truly take refuge to Christ, they will know why they need such a Savior.

And that's why we can only profitably partake of the Lord's Table when, in some measure, we understand the value of his finished work; when in some measure, we have learned by the Holy Spirit that we need precisely such a Savior; that we need a Savior who had to be crucified in order to secure our redemption. The Holy Spirit makes room in the heart for a crucified Christ. He will so deal with us that we understand in some measure that we need a crucified Christ. And so, the

Question is so weighty, therefore, “Am I a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all his benefits?” Because, congregation, only then, only then will our journey end well.

So, boys and girls, you were not able to partake of the Lord’s Table, but I want to talk to you as well. So this also is very important for you, even though you could not yet come. For you also, it is a very important matter. And so, for you, the question, the crucial question is, is this Jesus also your Savior? Have you learned already, as young as you are, that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. Because, as you well know, the old people must die. But young people can die, and life can end so unexpectedly. My dear friends, my dear boys and girls, unless I, unless you are a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross, unless we are the beneficiaries of his suffering, of his death, of his resurrection; unless we are the recipients of all those benefits that he has secured by his sacrifice, our journey will not end well. That’s why the Word of God exhorts us, “Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5), in the faith—the faith of all the saints; the faith of all those whom we find described in the Word of God; the faith of those whose spiritual life is really powerfully described in those wonderful words of Psalm 130, where the psalmist says, “LORD, if thou shouldst mark iniquity, who can stand? But with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared.” That’s the essence of spiritual life—the awareness of my sinfulness, the awareness that I cannot stand before God, but also the experience of the wonderful discovery, by the Holy Spirit, that with him, with the God before whom I cannot stand, that with that God, there is forgiveness, in order that he may be feared.

And so, we can put it this way—in every true believer, whether you’re a child, or whether you’re an adult, or an older person, all children of God, all true believers, recognize themselves in that very basic and foundational structure. That’s how the Heidelberg Catechism begins, when it asks the Question, “What must I know?” “What must I know to be able to live and die in comfort?” “What must I know?” I must know how great my sins and miseries are, how I may be delivered from that misery, and how I can show my gratitude to God for deliverance from that misery.

## **1. The Purpose of the Lord’s Supper**

*How art thou admonished...that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?* And that immediately points us to the very purpose of the Lord’s Supper. In other words, what is Christ’s desire by means of the Lord’s Supper? Christ’s desire is to admonish us—that’s an old word, that is, to teach us, to instruct us—and to assure us that by the very fact that we have put our trust in him, that we are partakers of that which he has accomplished on the cross, that we are partakers of all his benefits. Christ so much desires that his people be assured of that reality. Christ so desires that his people would live in the joy of that reality, of what he has done on their behalf. Oh, what a precious sacrament it is!

And correctly, the Catechism says that *Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him*. Christ has commanded me and all believers. So what that means, of course, and that’s correct, that’s biblically correct, is that, for a believer, attending the Lord’s Supper is not optional. It’s a command. Christ has commanded his church. Also, when he instituted the Lord’s Supper, the verbs that are used there are imperatives, they are commands. It’s a loving command. It is a holy obligation that the people of God have to partake of that sacrament. That’s important for us to realize. Because, what this emphasizes, as I said this morning even at the Table, that the initiative for this Supper is the Lord Jesus Christ’s. He’s the one who initiated this for the benefit of his people. And he lovingly commands his people regularly to partake of this meal.

And what a blessing it is, congregation, that ultimately, our partaking of the Lord's Table does not depend on our fickle emotions and our fickle experiences; is not determined by our spiritual ups and downs. What a blessing it is that that Supper comes on a regular basis, that on a regular basis, we hear the loving command of the Savior, "Do this in remembrance of me." What a blessing that the administration of the Lord's Supper is not determined by our worthiness or by our readiness. But that irrespective of where we are; irrespective of what our condition is, that blessed Supper comes again and again, that loving command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why the attendance at the Lord's Supper should not be a hit-and-miss affair, one time you attend, then you do not. No, this is a command that God's people must take seriously. This is a command of the Savior, a command with a very loving purpose. It says, *Adding these promises*, to his command: *first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me.* Notice the personal nature of the language that the Catechism uses here, and it's consistent with the word of Christ. Because, dear believer, Christ wants you to grasp that this is also for you. Christ want his children to arrive at an assured confidence in him and his finished work.

Now, I'm not minimizing that fact that God's children can be subject to great spiritual strife; and that at times God's children can struggle greatly with doubt; that God's children have ups and downs in their spiritual life. But that's precisely why this sacrament has been instituted. Christ knows how weak and how feeble we can be, and by means of this sacrament, he wants to strengthen that which he has wrought. Because his desire is that you would live in the joy of his salvation, his desire is that you would be assured of what he has done also for you. That's why the language that we use, echoing his own words, at the Lord's Table, are so significant, when I hand you the piece of bread. When I speak the words of Christ, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you." Now that's Christ's desire.

That's why Luther,<sup>1</sup> as you know, famously said—I've said this a number of times; I said it to my confession of faith class again after the church service this morning—that "True religion" Luther said, "is a matter of personal pronouns." In order to enjoy the comfort of salvation, I need to know that Christ is *my Savior*. I need to know that his body was broken for me. I need to know that his blood was shed for me. And Christ is a Savior who does not want his people to live in doubt of that reality. Christ is a Savior whose desire it is that his people would come to an assured knowledge, to an assured confidence that what he has done, he has also done for them.

And again, that's why the words of Isaiah are so significant. This is the calling of God's servants, to comfort God's people, to speak comfortably to Jerusalem, to declare to them that their warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned, that they have received double for all of their sins (Isaiah 40:2). And all of that is visibly reaffirmed also by means of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And so, Christ's objective is to assure people of their personal interest in his perfect sacrifice, and all the benefits proceeding from this sacrifice.

And so, congregation, what's also beautiful, is that in the second portion of that Answer, it says—let's continue to read—*And further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.* "He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life." What a precious truth and reality that is. So, when the Lord's Supper is administered—and of course, I am the agent by which it is

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther (1483–1546), was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor, and former Augustinian friar, who was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

administered to you—that I stand there as the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through us that Christ himself feeds and nourishes your soul to everlasting life.

Again, the language is significant, “To everlasting life”—what does that mean? What does it mean, “eternal life”? We read of it in John 6. Christ said, He that eats me, He that eats of that bread, he hath everlasting life” (verses 54–58). So again, what does that mean? Does that just mean that God’s children will live forever? It means much more than that. Because that eternal life, that everlasting life, becomes an experiential reality already here in this life. And the Lord’s Table is a place where we experience the reality and the wonder of that everlasting life. So again, what is eternal life? I want the boys and girls to understand it as well. And really, it consists of two important things, and I hope you will try to remember this, and that maybe your moms and dads can help you to remember this.

To understand what that means really, we have to go back to Paradise. Adam and Eve, they were alive, they were living souls. And what was it that they enjoyed before the fall? Two important things: they had an intimate relationship with God himself. God was their Father, they were his son and daughter. And they enjoyed communion and fellowship with him. So they had a relationship with God, and they lived in fellowship with God. That was the focal point of their life. Their whole life revolved around that relationship and on that blessed communion. That’s why, in the cool of the day, God would meet with them. He would commune with them. He would open his heart to them. And so, their life was a blessed interaction in living in communion with him, and living for him. And those two revolved around each other. That’s what it meant to be alive.

And because of sin, we have lost that life. By nature, we don’t have a saving relationship with our Maker. By nature, we do not live in fellowship with him. We are spiritually dead. But when, by the grace of God, we become believers, when the Spirit of God makes us a new creature, we begin to live. We begin to live again. The Holy Spirit, he brings us into an intimate relationship with God in Christ; he unites us to Christ. And out of that flows that desire, that yearning of the soul to have communion with God. That’s why it’s so striking that Christ said to Ananias, You can go to Saul of Tarsus, because he’s praying (Acts 9:11). A very simple statement, But that’s evidence that this Pharisee had become spiritually alive. He began to have communion with God, fellowship with God.

So let me summarize what I just said. Eternal life begins here, in the lives of God’s children. To be a partaker of eternal life, Jesus said, “When you eat of this bread, and when you drink of this wine; when you eat my body and drink my blood, you have eternal life.” That means that you will experience the reality of what it means to be a child of the living God; what it means to have communion with God. And so, the Lord’s Table is a visible affirmation of that reality. The Lord’s Table is a place in which God’s people gather round about that table to, first of all, have communion with Christ, communion with him; and to strengthen, to have that relationship with him strengthened and affirmed. And so, in a very real way, when God’s people gather round about this table, we see the functioning of that eternal life. And of course, in that sense, the Lord’s Table is a preview of that eternal life which is to come. And so, Christ *feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life*, and he does it *with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister; and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.*

## **2. The Partaking of the Lord’s Supper**

That brings us to the next Question: *What is it then to eat the crucified body, and drink the shed blood of Christ?* That’s significant language? How do you do that? How do you eat his crucified

body, and how do you drink his shed blood? Of course, Christ was not talking about literally eating his body and literally drinking his blood. But what he is saying by this, is that “When you eat the broken bread, and when you drink the shared wine, which are symbols of my broken body and of my shed blood, you are in a very real way you are interacting with me. You are drawing spiritual strength from what I have accomplished by my sacrifice.”

And so, the Answer is, *It is not only*—so there are two things, but first of all, it is *to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal*. That’s why *faith* has been called “the mouth of the soul.” So when, by faith, I embrace what Christ has done, when by faith, I feed upon that sacrifice; when I draw all my spiritual strength from what he has accomplished on the cross; then by faith, I am feasting upon that sacrifice, and I am drawing spiritual nourishment from that sacrifice. Because you see, that’s what sustains the spiritual life of God’s children. That’s why, time and again, we have to be redirected to that sacrifice, so that we would rest in that sacrifice alone; that we would draw all of our strength from that sacrifice; so that we would be assured of the pardon of sin and of life eternal.

Oh, to feed upon Christ, to feed upon his sacrifice, has as its blessed purpose that we would find rest for our souls in that sacrifice. That’s Christ’s desire, that we would understand that there is no other place for our soul to find rest. That’s why Paul said, “I’m determined not to know anything else among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). That was the core of his preaching. That was the foundation of his message. He said that’s where we find rest for our souls, in that perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*But also, besides that*—this is important too—is *to become more and more united to his sacred body, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us*. So, that means this, that partaking of the Lord’s Supper is not only to strengthen our faith in Christ, in terms of what he has done for us, but also to strengthen our relationship with him. In other words, to focus on what he is doing in us by his Holy Spirit.

And so, the purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to stimulate the spiritual life of the Christian. Because, you see, the life of the Christian it’s not just a resting in Christ, but it’s also a living out of Christ. And so, the Lord’s Supper is also intended to stimulate that blessed spiritual exercise of abiding in Christ. So, resting in Christ, resting in his finished work, resting in that perfect sacrifice, but also abiding in him. To put it very simply, it’s to strengthen, it’s to stimulate that blessed interaction with Christ and the believer. Because that abiding in Christ is such an essential part of true spiritual life, congregation. And we will only make progress spiritually, in proportion as we learn to abide in him. And as I promised you, at some point, I will do a series on John 15, because it’s so essential. But let me say very briefly here, what Christ is saying in John 15, he’s saying, “Do not only come to me to find your rest in me, but I want you to live in fellowship with me; I want you to walk with me; I want you to abide with me; I want you to remain in my presence.” And he promises that if we do, he will not disappoint us. He said, “If you abide in me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit. So, in other words, in Christ, there is full provision for a prosperous and fruitful spiritual life.

And how slow we are to learn this. And the devil understands this as well. The devil will do everything in his power to keep us from abiding in him. That’s why this is so essential for the Christian life that we maintain that daily walk with Christ; that daily we feed upon his Word. Not just when the Lord’s Supper comes, but the Lord’s Supper should stimulate us. The very fact that, in a fresh way, we have again experienced who Christ is, what he has done for us, should stimulate us also to walk with him and to live in fellowship with him.

So it says, *Besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy*

*Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us.* And so, the Lord's Supper is meant to stimulate. It's to live out of Christ, to rest in Christ, to rest in what he has done for us, and to live out of Christ, so that, by grace, we may live for him; and so that we might learn that his death is the fountain of our life, and that his life will ultimately result in the death of my life. Because the more I abide in him, the more I learn to live out of Christ, the more I'm going to die to myself. Those two belong inseparably together. Because the more I die to myself, and the more I learn to live out of Christ alone, the more Christ will be glorified, *So that we*, the Catechism says beautifully, *though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding "flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone."* And that emphasizes that even though our Savior has ascended on high, the Lord's Supper reminds us there is a real and vital relationship between this ascended Christ and between his children. And the Lord's Supper is meant to strengthen that, to remind us that we are, in a very real spiritual way, we are united to him. We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

And then, finally, *That we live, and are governed forever by one spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.* So let me try to explain to you what the Catechism means here. It's a very simple analogy. So, we have a body that is made up of many members. But we have one soul—one soul that governs our entire body, that governs all the members of our body. We have one soul, in a sense, that unites all those members into one functioning whole. And the Catechism is saying that's how it ought to be in the family of God. Because, ultimately, that relationship with Christ, that feeding upon him by faith, that resting in him, that abiding in him, that walking in him should manifest itself also in the manner in which we interact with one another as members of the same body. That's why we often refer to the Lord's Table as the Communion Table, a place where we have communion with Christ, but also where we have communion with one another. That becomes very visible when all God's people are gathered round about God's Table, emphasizing that partaking of the Lord's Supper happens within the context of the family and of the household of God. That's why it ought to be a public statement that all those who are at that table love each other in Christ. That's why it's so important, of course, whenever the Lord's Supper is administered, that we examine ourselves also in light of our relationships, to make sure that there are no obstacles; that we can, with a clear conscience, sit down at the table, and have a clear conscience that we truly love everyone that is seated at that table; so that we may live and realize that *we are governed...by one spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.*

### **3. The Promise of the Lord's Supper**

And then finally, *The Promise of the Lord's Supper*, expressed in Question #77, and so, let's look at that passage again, of 1 Corinthians 11, which is quoted in the Catechism. You don't have to turn to your Bibles if you have your psalter ready. Let's read this passage again, and follow me, please (verse 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: 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. 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. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

I want to just emphasize that precious phrase, "the same night in which he was betrayed." What a beautiful statement that is; what an extraordinary fact that is, that the same night in which he was betrayed, in which he knew full well what was coming; knowing that Gethsemane was before him; knowing that Gabbatha was before him, that mock trial; knowing that he would be scourged; knowing that Golgotha was before him; fully conscious of all of this, we would have

understood that the Savior would have been completely preoccupied with what was coming; but he was preoccupied with their wellbeing, the disciples, but ultimately he was preoccupied with our wellbeing. And so, when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, the night he was betrayed, he had them and his entire church on his mind. He instituted a sacrament of which he knew that this would be to the benefit of his children until he would return the second time in glory. "The night he was betrayed"—what a comforting truth that is. How this reminds us how very much we are on the mind of Christ.

And if that was true on the eve of his crucifixion, if that was true the night he was betrayed, when all of this was coming, how much more this is true today. We have an exalted Christ, an ascended Christ, at the Father's right hand. And that Christ, who instituted the Lord's Supper the night he was betrayed; that Christ is fully engaged on our behalf; of that Christ, we know that we are always on his mind, always—he ever lives to intercede for us. To our shame, we have to say that he's not always on our mind, sadly, and shamefully. But we are always on his mind. And every Lord's Supper is a tangible reminder of that.

And then the Catechism also quotes the promise the Apostle Paul makes in the 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians, where he 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." And so, simply, the Apostle is simply saying that in the Lord's Supper, Christ communicates the power of his sacrifice to us. We have communion; we receive the benefits of his blood; we receive the benefits of his broken body, the benefits of his sacrifice. And it strengthens, it strengthens, or should strengthen the bond that unites us with fellow believers as well.

And so, congregation, what a blessed sacrament the Lord's Supper is indeed, a sacrament that was observed and performed every Lord's Day in the early church. Every Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper would be administered. That has changed throughout the ages. Our practice of doing it four times a year is rooted in the practice of the church of Geneva.<sup>2</sup> But Christ never stipulated precisely how frequently the Lord's Supper should be administered. He simply said, "As often as ye do it, do it in remembrance of me." That's why it is important for the Lord's Supper to be administered regularly. And it needs to be said that both Calvin<sup>3</sup> and Luther were very much in favor of weekly administration of the Lord's Supper. And Calvin, at the end of his life, finally agreed to do it once a month. And why?—because they understood the benefit of the frequency of the Lord's Supper, recognizing that that sacrament is intended to strengthen our weak and fragile faith. And so, we're thankful that we do this regularly. But I want to, I need to be honest, here, that Christ does not stipulate precisely how frequently it should be. But obviously, the language that he uses implies regular administration of it. "As often as ye do it, do it in remembrance of me." And so, it literally says, in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 26: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

And so, congregation, a blessed sacrament indeed, administered again in the midst of our congregation in this morning hour. And so, I want to end where I started. Are we—not just are we partakers of the Lord's Table—but are we partakers of Christ, and all his benefits? We read it together from John 6, verse 53, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." That's quite a statement. So in other words, what is the nature of true spiritual life? The nature of true spiritual

<sup>2</sup> Geneva, Switzerland was where John Calvin's church was established, and much of the forms and principles of the Protestant Reformation were set and established there.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and well-known Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

life is that it feeds upon Christ, and that it feeds upon his sacrifice. That's what Christ is saying. And so, that again emphasizes that Christ and his Person and his work is the very core of all spiritual life. That's why he says in verse 45, "Every man...that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." That's the essence of true spiritual experience, this coming to Christ, not only at the Lord's Supper, but this coming to him over, and over again, to live out of him.

And so, may God bless his Word, may he bless what happened in this morning hour, and may the fruit of our partaking of the Lord's Table, may the fruit be evident, may it be evident in our homes, in our families, that we have been with Christ, have been at his Table, that we've been fed and nourished, and may the fruit be an increasing likeness to Christ.

And if we don't know this Savior yet, it is still the accepted time. I want to say again what I said at the beginning. Your life journey will not end well unless you are a partaker of Christ and of all of his benefits. And therefore, do not rest until you may know, on biblical grounds, that you are a partaker of Christ and all of his benefits. Amen.

### **Let's pray.**

Lord, bless the Word we have attempted to proclaim tonight. Thou knowest what has transpired this day, and we do pray that, by the mighty work of thy Spirit, what has happened today would be abundantly fruitful in our congregation, and above all, in our own personal lives. And Lord, we pray, that by grace, we may eat the body of Christ and drink his blood, that we may feed upon him and upon his finished work; that we may experience the reality of eternal life, the reality that when we interact with him, when we lean upon him, when we abide in him, that we will experience the favor of God, the reality of eternal life, to know that in him, we are united to God; and that in him, we may have fellowship and communion with God, all of which will become a perfect reality in the world to come. Lord, we are slow learners, but continue to work in our hearts by thy Spirit. And we pray that also what has happened this morning, that it may bear abundant fruit, to the glory of thy name, to the wellbeing of our souls, and even as a blessing to those who surround us. Keep us safely as we depart from here. Bless us in this coming week, as we return to our daily calling. And gather with us again this coming Lord's Day, as we hope to commemorate the outpouring of thy Spirit. We ask it in Jesus' name alone. Amen.