

The Lord's Supper (4th)

(Our study today is of a more positive nature in that the remaining articles in both the Westminster and Baptist confessions are essentially the same. Therefore, we will discuss of blessings of the Lord's Supper.)

Some of the things that I would like to discuss regarding benefits of the Lord's Supper where Baptists and Protestants agree are (1) that it is "showing forth the sacrifice" of the death of Christ, (2) that it is a "confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof," (3) that it is a confirmation of the believer's "spiritual nourishment and growth in him," (4) it is the believer's "further engagement in and to all duties which" he owes unto Christ, (5) it is "to be a bond and pledge of" the believer's "communion with" Christ "and with each other," and, (6) that "worthy receivers ... spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death." There are many other things stated in the confessions where the two groups agree, but I believe the six things listed will sum up personal benefits that are communicated to the believer in participating in the Lord's Supper. I do not mean to imply that when one partakes of the Lord's Supper that he will necessarily be consciously aware of everything listed. The mind can only think on one thing at a time. Much is said today about multitasking, but if a man is responsible for three computers he can only type and think about what he is typing on one computer at a time. Yes, he may move rapidly from one machine to another, performing different functions on each computer, but he does each separately. He does not do two separate things at one time. Only God can truly multitask. Equally, when preachers talk about multiple benefits associated with one function (like the Lord's Supper), we need to assure the believer that we do not mean to imply that all the benefits will be received at the same time. Also, we need to make plain to the congregation that the particular benefit that is feeding one's soul at a given time may be only blessed to him while another or other benefits are refreshing the soul of others.

The Lord's Supper is a congregational function, but this does not mean that each believer is receiving the same quality (or quantity) of communion with the Lord. We are individuals and we commune individually. Yes, there is to be oneness in the communion service with the congregation, but this does not negate the individuality of believers. The services of modern church goers are too often centered around musical presentations and entertaining messages calculated to bring the audience to a crescendo of an emotional peak that satisfies the base nature of man. This excitement can hardly be separated from the emotional experience of one when his favorite team wins the game. Everyone is expected to leave the building feeling good—good about themselves; good about the program; good about the message; good about the messenger. This is far from the exhortations of Paul to new converts and newly planted congregations. He told them "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not suggesting that emotions are not to be involved in worshipping the Lord. Emotions are to be involved, but they are to be the emotions of the spirit and not the flesh. Much needs to be taught about the difference between the two. I fear that the majority of professing believers today do not know anything about this difference. While we do not have time to take up this subject in its fullness, it can be definitely said that when one is excited about a belief or practice that is not supported by the Scriptures it is an excitement of the flesh and not of a spiritual nature from the Lord. The Lord willing, I hope we can discuss this somewhat so that you will be able to discern what it is to benefit spiritually when partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Before trying to discuss the benefits as listed at the beginning, allow me to address something else at this time. As I stated before, we are individuals. For example, the preceding events of the week prior to participating in the Lord's Supper for each individual are different. One believer may have gone through

several trials and hardships while another brother's life was full of various roads of success. Naturally, each one will come to the congregation of the Lord with different condition of soul. This is not to say that one is better or less than the other. Both may equally be fellowshiping the Lord in the fullness of the spirit of his soul, but they are on a separate plane. One person is more sober-minded while the other's soul is not weighed down so much. Both are trusting in the Lord; both are relying on the righteousness of Christ as the foundation of his salvation; both equally love the Lord; but their state of communion is different. Their communion with the Lord is personal and aligned with the providential dealings of the Lord with each one individually. When we multiply this scenario with all the members of the congregation participating in the Lord's Supper, we must not think that each and every believer will be aligned in their thoughts and emotions. One believer may be joyful while the brother sitting next to him is somewhat sober-minded. This does not mean that one is more spiritual than the other. In fact, both may be equally communing with the Lord, but each in his own personal relationship with the Lord.

I believe this is extremely important and needs to be made plain. I remember when I was a new convert that I thought if I did not cry during the Lord's Supper then I was not spiritual enough. (I have no idea how I arrived at that conclusion.) More than once I left from partaking of the Lord's Supper believing that I was greatly missing out and was very unspiritual. No doubt, being new to the faith I did not know much, but it was only after years of studying the Scriptures that I realized the significance of what is pointed out above. After being in the ministry for over 50 years and talking with many believers, I believe others are equally perplexed regarding a true spiritual understanding about the emotions and experiences involved in partaking of the Lord's Supper. Needless to say, if one is ignorant and unknowledgeable of the Scriptures and the doctrines revolving around the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is unlikely he will, in all reality, commune with the Lord by partaking of a small piece of bread and a small cup of wine. In fact, unless one is consciously walking and fellowshiping with the Lord on a daily basis, it is impossible to conclude that anything will change when he participates formally as the Lord's Supper is being observed in the congregation. There is no mysterious happening when a little bread is eaten or a little wine is consumed at an ecclesiastical function. The bread and wine are simply just that and they do not become some mystical element by the prayer of a preacher or by the consumption of the participant. They were bread and wine before and they are bread and wine when consumed.

Therefore, we find that it is extremely essential that we understand the importance of the meaning behind the Lord's Supper so that we may receive the benefits that the Lord intended when He instituted it that night prior to His death in the upper room. When He distributed the bread and wine to His disciples that night He told them that it they were to remember and understand that those elements were to cause them to reflect on His broken body and shed blood for them for the remission of sins, cf. Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-26. Unless we understand the meaning and intent behind these verses, there is no way we can fellowship the Lord in this service. This is why theology is so important. Behind the death of Christ are various truths that need to be understood, at least in part, for that piece of bread and that cup of wine to have significance to the soul and spirit of the believer. But beyond that, it is not merely a theological knowledge of such truths as redemption, remission, righteousness, justification, atonement, adoption, and other related topics. It is a personal and intimate understanding of such truths as they spiritually apply to one's own soul. This is how the benefits of the Lord's Supper are communicated to the heart and soul of the believer. Obviously, it is essential that the Holy Spirit apply this to our souls for it to be effectual, but He does it by the truth, the word of God. He is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17) and He takes the things (teachings) of Christ (Jn. 14:26) and bring them to our remembrance and manifest them to us as we walk in fellowship with Him. (Study the context of John chapters 14 through 16.)

I trust what has been said today will set the stage and better prepare us as we look at the things listed at the beginning of this podcast. The Lord willing, we will take them up in our next session. However, our

time is up for today. May the Lord bless your soul in your studies and meditations of the sacrifice and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.