

**Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. This morning we gather together as the saints of the Lord Jesus Christ to observe the sacrament of communion. This day, the Lord's Day, is commanded by God to be set apart as a holy day for His people. But today is a day in which we celebrate the feast of the cross, this sacramental meal where we commune with our risen Savior in remembrance of His atoning sacrifice on behalf of His people. Let us consider this sacrament by hearing the inspired Word of God from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 beginning at verse 23.**

**\*Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26\***

**\*Pray\***

**One of the greatest dangers you can do as a member of Christ's Church is to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. If we were to read further in this passage we would see the Apostle's warning against eating and drinking in an unworthy manner, that it is the cause for some within the Church to be sick or even to die. Great care has been taken by many pastors and theologians to show the importance of self-examination and due preparation before coming to the Lord's Table. That is why in our communion season we have preparatory services so that you can be confronted with the law of God and see where the work of preparation must be focused in your own life. We, as believers, must be shown our sins and wants, where we have failed to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength, and how we have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves. And then, after being confronted with your sins, you are presented Christ, the glorious Savior of mankind, who took on the sins of His people and nailed them to the cross. It is in Him that you find forgiveness for your sins and are clothed in His righteousness which makes you worthy to come to this table and partake of these elements. But oftentimes we neglect to consider one aspect of preparation to partake in a worthy manner, something which is of such great importance that it separates the sacramental meal from merely eating some bread and drinking some wine like you may do**

in any other meal. What I am referring to is what the Lord's Supper actually is and what it entails. So much more than eating a bit of bread and drinking a sip of wine takes place at the communion table. There is much that we ought to have in mind when we partake of this sacrament. It is a remembering ordinance, in which we meditate upon the sacrificial death of Christ. It is a strengthening ordinance, in which the Holy Spirit really and truly applies the benefits of Christ to us so that it becomes an effectual means of grace. These are aspects which much of the Church as a whole have held onto and still teach regularly. But there is one aspect that the modern Church seems to have let fade in the past, yet our Reformed forefathers understood to be a vital aspect of the sacrament, and that is that the Lord's Supper is a covenanting ordinance. So the exhortation to you today is renew your covenant and partake of the covenant meal. We will consider this exhortation in three ways: first, by showing the Lord's Supper is a covenant meal; next, by seeing the act of covenanting in the Supper; and finally, by observing our covenantal duties following the Supper.

So first let us consider that the Lord's Supper is a covenant meal. To do this we must understand what a covenant meal is. Throughout the Scripture the people of God make covenant with Jehovah and in an act of covenanting they partake of a meal. In Genesis 31:51-54 we see this clearly in the three-party covenant between Jacob, Laban, and the Lord, "And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee: This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount." Here we see that the covenant that is made is one between parties which are at peace with one another, peace between Jacob and Laban and peace between those two and Jehovah signified by the sacrifice that was

made. In Exodus 24 we see that after the law was given to the people and they gave their assent to it the blood of the covenant was sprinkled upon the people, sealing that covenant upon them, and then the representatives of the people partook of a covenantal meal, “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.”

Perhaps the most important covenant meal for the Old Testament people of God was the Passover in Exodus chapter 12, that meal signifying the covenant God made with His people to bring them out of bondage in Egypt. “And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover.” It's in the context of this covenant meal that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Each of the Gospel accounts make a point to show this. While it may seem at first to simply show that Christ was replacing the old feast with a new one, He is actually foretelling the fulfillment of one covenant meal and instituting another. That is why He took the bread and the cup and gave it to His disciples after they had supped. It was to show the continuity between the former administrations of the covenant of grace and the new which had come. The words of Christ in the words of institution make this clear as well, “this cup is the new testament in my blood.” He doesn't say that the cup pertains to the New Testament, but that it is the New Testament. The

**word here for ‘testament’ is also translated ‘covenant.’ The whole New Testament or New Covenant is in it, and it has the sum and substance of it.**

**Friends, when you come to this Table and you partake of this meal you must realize what it is that you are doing. You are not simply scarfing a bit of bread and a sip of wine, but you are being invited by the Lord of glory, the King of Kings, your Savior, Jehovah Himself to sit at His Table and sup with Him. What a glorious truth this is. Have you considered how marvelous a thing this is that you are invited to the Lord’s Table to commune with Him over a covenant meal? It is not the sacrificial lamb of old that is set before you this day. It is the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. See that sacrifice which purchased peace between you and God in that act of making the New Covenant, Christ’s body broken for you, His blood poured out for the remission of your sins, and partake of these elements in full understanding that you are partaking of the covenant meal of the New Testament Church. Receive it with all holy reverence and attention as you wait upon God. Diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions and meditate on Christ’s death and sufferings. Do you hunger and thirst for Christ? Do you long to commune with your risen Savior? Then come and feast on Him by faith as you partake of this covenant meal.**

**If this Supper truly is a covenant meal, and we have seen that it is, then there is a responsibility laid upon you in partaking of this feast. There must be an act of covenanting in the Supper. The primary act of covenanting that is seen throughout Scripture is that of giving and receiving. Under the Abrahamic administration Jehovah gave to Abraham the promise that through him the nations would be blessed and that his offspring would outnumber the stars in the sky. Abraham had the duty to receive this promise by faith, and it was credited to him righteousness. (Genesis 15:6) Under the Mosaic administration Jehovah gave unto the people a land in which to dwell and laws which were to govern their society as a chosen**

people. Their duty was to give heed to what the Lord had said and to endeavor to obey His commands. Exodus 24:3, “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Here under the New Covenant the pattern is the same, “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.”

Giving is God’s part and taking is ours. God gives us bread and wine by His delegated officer; we receive them from the minister as from His representative. The bread is His body broken for you, the one who was crushed for your sins and iniquities. Isaiah 53:4-5, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 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.” The cup is the new testament in His blood. His blood was poured out to reconcile us to God, and now we drink of it in a spiritual sense, that we may be partakers of reconciliation. God gives Himself, His Son, His Spirit, His grace, His favor, and all that can be reasonably desired or truly wanted to you in this Supper. And so your duty is to take what He has given you and by doing so taking upon yourself the duties of that covenant. The terms of this covenant are simple, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Your salvation is what has been promised in this covenant. Your salvation is what has been purchased in this covenant by the breaking of Christ’s body and the shedding of His blood. And it is here in this meal that this covenant of salvation is sealed unto you.

His blood is the seal and sanction of all the privileges of the New Covenant, and when you partake of this sacrament worthily

**you receive those privileges as your own. You have the New Covenant, and you are now entitled to all the blessings of the New Covenant, confirmed by Christ's blood. And so you have an obligation in this covenant now, that is to serve Jehovah with the entirety of your being. By participating in this meal, the covenant with Christ is ratified and confirmed to you. God confirms His promise to redeem those who come to Him through the cross of Christ. You in turn promise to be faithful servants of Christ whom you trust. Matthew Henry says that in partaking of these elements the communicant is declaring, "We hereby resign, surrender, and give up our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, covenanting and promising that we will, by his strength, serve him faithfully, and walk closely with him in all manner of gospel obedience all our days. Claiming the blessings of the covenant, we put ourselves under the bonds of the covenant." Friends, it is by doing this, by taking on these obligations of the covenant to a life of faithfulness in the Lord, that you make this covenant your own. Our Directory for Public Worship emphasizes this as well when it states that the Lord's Supper is "a covenant and pledge of their commitment to faithful discipleship, and of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His body, the church."**

**This covenant meal also has the act of remembrance of Christ. He commands, "this do in remembrance of me." Covenant ceremonies, and especially covenant meals, are acts of remembering the gracious works of Jehovah towards His people. In these covenants found throughout Scripture there is the underlying remembrance that the people are to have that the Lord will send a Savior to redeem His people. The sacrifices were a constant reminder of the sinfulness of man and the graciousness of God in providing a substitute in their place. The meal was a reminder that the Lord provides for His people out of His bounty. And so in this New Covenant meal it is Christ, who offered Himself as the substitutionary sacrifice as a propitiation for the sins of His people, that is to ever be in the forefront of your minds. This covenant is one**

which is never to be forgotten, an everlasting covenant unto all generations. In it we are assured that God will never forget His covenant because it is sealed with the blood of His very own Son, and it is a means of assisting us in never forgetting this covenant ourselves by the applying of it by the Holy Spirit. To mindlessly partake of these elements without remembering Christ who is spiritually present in this meal is a terribly wicked thing. As you eat of the bread meditate upon His back ripped open from the beating He unjustly received. Meditate upon His hands and feet pierced with nails as punishment for your sins. Meditate upon His brow, stuck with a crown of thorns which was intended to make a mockery of Him but only showed His royal status. His body was broken for you. As you drink of the cup meditate upon His blood poured out for the remission of your sins. Meditate on the fact that the perfect Son of God paid the ransom of your sins with the very life-giving blood that flowed forth from Him. As you partake of this covenant meal, do so in remembrance of Him.

Finally, I want to end with our covenantal duties following the Supper. The obligation placed upon the people of old was not a momentary things solely tied to the act of covenanting. It was a perpetual obligation that they were to observe all their days. And so it is with you, dear saints. The Apostle says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." You are to ever be showing the Lord's death till He come. When we make covenants we are declaring something to all who see. In this covenant meal you are declaring the Lord Jesus Christ, His death on behalf of sinners, to all who witness. And this showing forth Christ is not something that is only tied to the moment of partaking of the elements. It is a perpetual obligation placed upon you. Your life is to be an ever present testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you. Paul says in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." All of your members, all of your faculties, all of your being is to be a witness of the death of Christ.

**That means when you go to work your actions and words are to show forth Christ's death. You are to bear testimony to your co-workers and boss and clients to the great salvation you have received, no matter if it may cost you your job. When you are in school you show forth Christ's death by proclaiming the Gospel to your fellow students, your teachers, and all who you encounter, no matter if it may cost you your friends or your reputation. When you are in the home you show forth Christ's death in how you operate in your God-given role. Husbands, you show forth Christ's death when you love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. Wives, you show forth Christ's death in the respect and submission you show your husband who is your spiritual head. Children, you show forth Christ's death in your obedience to your parents in the Lord. These obligations of the covenant do not end when you leave this building, but continue till He come.**

**There is also the duty of praying that the Spirit would make the sign and seal of this covenant effectual in your heart and life. Meditate upon what is proclaimed to you in the preaching of the Word and what has been given to you in this sacrament. Pray that the Lord would cause it to quicken you, giving you a fresh invigorated faith which desires to fulfill the obligations you have just taken upon yourself. Ask the Lord to use this covenant meal as a means to comfort you in times of affliction, that it would be a constant reminder that no matter what comes your way, no matter what trials or tribulations you go through, no matter what temptations you may face, that you are in Christ and nothing, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate" you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let this sacrament renew your covenant with God and your love for others. Sitting at a table and sharing a meal with someone is one of the most intimate things brothers and sisters in Christ can do. How much more should sitting at the Lord's Table and sharing this sacramental meal cause you to grow more and more in your love and affection for one another. And**



**let this meal drive you to a heart of gratitude, of thankfulness to God for what He has done. This evening we will have a thanksgiving service to do just that corporately as a people, but your thanksgiving ought not end simply because the minister pronounces the benediction.**

**And dear friends, if this is not the result in your heart after partaking of this sacramental meal then there is great need for further self-examination and repentance. Humble yourself before the Lord and ask that He make these things real in you. See what sin it is within yourself that is keeping these things from becoming a reality and confess them to the Lord. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He will hear your prayers and He will answer them. But perhaps you are here today and none of this applies to you because you have never been made partakers of this covenant. You are still dead in your trespasses and sins and in need of a Savior. If that is you then call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to wash away your sins with His blood and to clothe you in His righteousness. Do not say to yourself that you will wait until some other day. Friends, today is the day of salvation. You are not promised tomorrow. Bend your knee to Christ, submit yourself to Him, make covenant with Jehovah, and fulfill your covenantal duties.**

**Brothers and sisters, this Table is set before you. The covenant has been made with you. The Lord is your God and you are His people. There is an invitation to you this day: come and sit at the King’s Table. Come and commune with your risen Savior and your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Come and partake of the elements of bread and wine, feasting on Christ in a real spiritual way. Renew your covenant and partake of the covenant meal.**