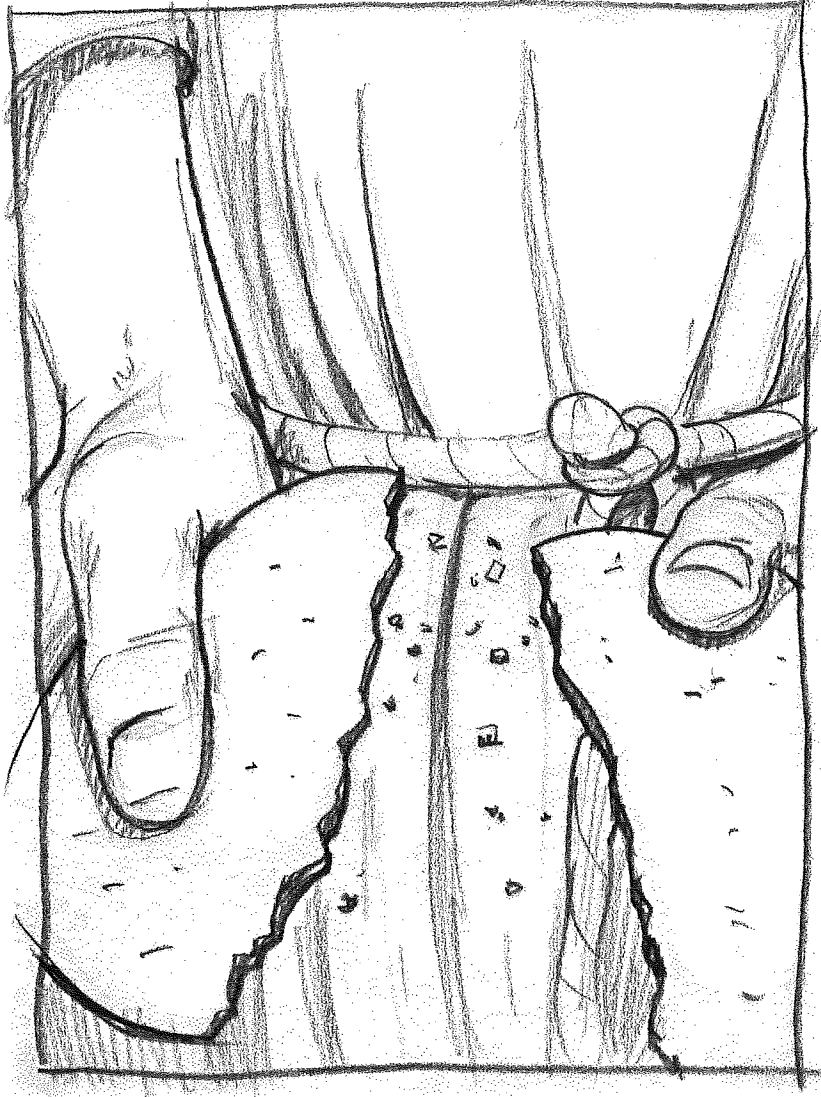


Chapter Fifteen



*The Lord's Supper – The Sacrament
Which Nourishes The Church's Life*

XV. THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE SACRAMENT WHICH NOURISHES THE CHURCH'S LIFE

INTRODUCTION

We saw in the last chapter that in *I Corinthians 10*, St. Paul compares the experiences and blessings of the Old Testament Church with those of the New. He says, **"You should understand, my brothers, that our ancestors were all under the pillar of cloud, and all of them passed through the Red Sea; and so they all received baptism into the fellowship of Moses in cloud and sea. They all ate the same supernatural food, and all drank the same supernatural drink; I mean, they all drank from the supernatural rock that accompanied their travels and that rock was Christ"** (*I Corinthians 10:4 New English Bible*).

In the New Testament we begin our Christian "journey", as they did, with Baptism—baptism not into Moses, but into Christ. But then, just as God provided for them in the wilderness a supernatural food called manna, and miraculously provided fresh, cold water which gushed out of a rock when Moses struck it with his rod—so also in the New Testament, Christians are provided with a heavenly, spiritual food for their journey to the Promised Land of heaven. And that heavenly, spiritual food, is the sacrificed Body and Blood of Jesus.

Because Jesus in great love allowed His Body to be nailed to the Cross and His Blood to be spilled out—by dying in our place, He won for us forgiveness of sins and **eternal life**. Thus, Jesus became for us "the Bread of Life," which means that those who "eat" this Bread receive life from God which is indestructible and eternal. Ordinary bread, and even the "heavenly bread" which God provided in the wilderness, only gives a burst of energy to our bodies, but in a few hours we are hungry again, and it does not nourish our spirits. But since Jesus gave up his body and blood for us, **His sacrifice becomes the "Bread" by which we receive God's life, eternal life, into our minds, hearts and spirits.**

But how do we eat and drink the sacrificed body and blood of Jesus so we get eternal life from His sacrifice? Well, we "eat" and "drink" the sacrificed body and blood of Jesus first of all by **believing in Him**. In *John 6*, Jesus said, **"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."** So by coming to Jesus and **believing in Him**, we satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst.

But Jesus also permits us to participate in His sacrificed Body and Blood in a more earthly and personal way, in that He gives us His sacrificed body and His poured out blood, to eat and drink in the Lord's Supper. The Bible tells us that the night before He was crucified, Jesus took some unleavened bread during the Passover meal, prayed over it, and then handed it to His Apostles saying, **"Take this and eat it; this is my body which is (sacrificed) for you."**

Introduction (Cont'd)

Then, later in the meal, Jesus took a cup filled with wine, which was also a part of the Passover meal, and said a prayer of thanksgiving over it. Then he passed this cup to His Apostles, saying, **“All of you, drink from this; for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”** (*Matt. 26:27-28, free translation*).

It is hard for people to understand why Jesus would give us a special bread and tell us to eat it because it is His sacrificed body, and then pray over a cup of wine, give it to us, and tell us to drink it because it is His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Yet, this is God's way of doing things—He wraps up spiritual blessings and gifts in ordinary, physical, material packages—the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism, and the total sacrificed body and blood of Jesus in The Lord's Supper.

It may help us to understand this better to realize that even in the Old Testament, in the Passover Feast, an innocent lamb was killed, and its blood was painted on the sides and top of the door of each home. Then the Israelites roasted the Lamb **and ate it**. And while they were eating the sacrificed Lamb their homes were being “passed over” by the Angel of Death because the blood of the Lamb was shielding them from the punishment of God. So even in the Old Testament the people **ate the sacrifice that saved their lives**.

In the New Testament we are told that Christ is our Passover Lamb Who was sacrificed for us (*I Corinthians 5:7*). And the night before His **“Exodus”** ** (when He died on the cross and rose again), on that very night He gave His sacrificed Body and Blood to His disciples to “eat and drink.” ** (*Luke 9:31* “departure” = **Exodus** in Greek)

When we eat this bread over which a blessing has been spoken, and drink this wine over which a blessing has been spoken, it becomes a **Sacrament** in which Jesus gives us His sacrificed body and blood in a way that we do not taste it or see it, but it is there and so are its benefits - the forgiveness of sins and all that His death won for us. As we partake of the Lord's Supper we are like the Israelites of old, eating the Passover Lamb whose death was saving their lives. Similarly, as we partake of the Lord's Supper, Christ, our Passover Lamb is shielding us from the judgment of God, by removing our sins and uniting us with Himself.

This, apparently, was what Jesus was talking about when He shocked some of His fellow Israelites with the statement, **“I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.”** (*John 6:53-55*). (NIV)

But remember! We eat this heavenly bread and drink the sacrifice of His blood, by **believing in Him and trusting that His sacrifice removes all our sins**, at the same time that we **physically** eat and drink the special bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Without such **faith in the heart**, eating and drinking the Lord's Supper **with our mouths** will not benefit us.

1. THE LORD'S SUPPER AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE CHURCH

Next to preaching the Gospel, no observance is more important or meaningful to the Christian Church than The Lord's Supper. In the New Testament, and in the early Church, baptism and The Lord's Supper are treated as great gifts of God through which the blessings won by Christ's death and resurrection are imparted to us. Here, in this Sacrament, the Church feels a closeness to its Lord, and a unity with other Christians, that is the nearest thing to the fellowship of heaven that can be known in this life. Here too, we perceive one of the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith; for in this Sacrament, Jesus unites each Christian with Himself in a personal way. He sort of puts His arms around us and says, "Because I sacrificed my Body for you and shed my Blood for you, you are forgiven and now my life is in you and you are in me, and all is well between us." In a way that we do not understand with our minds, or feel with our senses, Jesus gives us His Body which was nailed to the Cross and His Blood which was poured out on the Cross, along with the blessed bread and wine. And with this, He gives us the benefits of His death, especially the forgiveness of our sins. The Lord's Supper is that Sacrament which Christ has ordained for the **continual nourishment of His Church** until the end of time.

2. CHRIST'S WORDS BY WHICH HE ORDAINED THE LORD'S SUPPER – (A combined account of CHRIST'S WORDS IN MATTHEW 26; MARK 14; LUKE 22; AND I CORINTHIANS 11). (WORDS OF INSTITUTION)

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night of His betrayal, took bread, and when He had blessed it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is (given) for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also, He took a cup, spoke a blessing, and said, 'All of you, drink of this. This cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

3. WHAT CHRIST GIVES US IN THE SACRAMENT

In this Sacrament, together with the consecrated bread and wine, Christ, according to His clear words, gives to us **His body** which was sacrificed for us, and **His blood** which was poured out to atone for our sins. According to Christ's words, we believe that His body and blood are **actually present** in the Lord's Supper, and are received in a **sacramental manner** by those who eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine in faith.

Matt. 26:26 "Take and eat; this is my body." (NIV)

Mark 14:24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." (NIV)

I Cor. 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a **participation*** in the **blood of Christ?** And is not the bread that we break a **participation*** in the **body of Christ?** (NIV) (* Greek, *Koinonia*, a sharing in something together.)

I Cor. 10:17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, **for we all partake of the one bread.** (NRSV)

4. WHAT THE BELIEVER RECEIVES AND EXPERIENCES IN THIS SACRAMENT

Christ's words, 'given for you' and 'poured out...for the forgiveness of sins,' indicate that the believer who receives this Sacrament not only receives Christ's Body and Blood, but also the benefits which His sacrifice obtained, namely, the **forgiveness of our sins**.

Since the means by which our forgiveness was obtained—Christ's sacrificed Body and Blood—is here given to us in the most tangible manner (eating and drinking), **our confidence and assurance of forgiveness is greatly strengthened**.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. **In this Sacrament we obtain the benefits of Christ's death**, and we receive them in such a way that our confidence of forgiveness is strengthened.
2. We remember, as Christ asked us to, how bitterly He suffered to obtain our salvation. But the reason Christ asked us to, "do this in remembrance of Me," is not primarily for His benefit but for our own. For only as we **remember** His death will we appreciate sufficiently what Christ has done for us, and only then will **our confidence of forgiveness and eternal life rest where it should—on the death of Christ**.
3. **We feel and express our deep unity** with all believers in Jesus Christ. "**Because there is one Bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one Bread**" (*I Corinthians 10:17*). (NRSV)
4. **We proclaim to the world** that Christ's sacrificed body and blood is the center of our hope as Christians. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes**" (*I Corinthians 11:26*). (NIV)
5. **We look forward to the time** when we shall be with Christ in heaven. "I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (*Matthew 26:29*). (NRSV)

5. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT RECEIVING THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A SERIOUS MATTER

The Bible warns us against receiving this **Sacrament** in an “unworthy manner,” so we do not bring guilt and judgment upon ourselves. It also tells Christians to “examine” themselves before they partake of the Lord's Supper. For these reasons some churches restrict participation in the Lord's Supper to those who have been instructed in the Christian faith and to those who are confessing their faith and living a Christian life. In the Lutheran Church, children are generally not permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper until they have been instructed and confessed their faith in confirmation.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

1. Do I trust in Jesus' death as the basis of my forgiveness and acceptance before God?
2. Do I believe that in this Sacrament, Christ gives me His sacrificed Body and Blood together with the consecrated bread and wine, for the forgiveness of my sins?
3. Am I repentant? Am I truly sorry for my sins, and do I really want to overcome them and live in obedience to God's will and word?
4. Do I love God and confess Jesus as my Lord, and am I trying with God's help, to do what Jesus has taught me to do?
5. Am I living in Love? — Love toward God and love toward all people, especially my fellow Christians?

Prov. 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (RSV)

I Cor. 11:27-30 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord **in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.** For anyone who eats and drinks **without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. (NIV)

II Cor. 13:5 **Examine yourselves** to see whether you are living in the faith. **Test yourselves.** Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! (NRSV)

I John 4:15-16 God abides in those who **confess** that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and **those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.** (NRSV)

I John 4:20-21 But if someone says, ‘I love God,’ while at the same time hating his fellow-Christian, he is a liar. If he does not love a fellow-Christian whom he has seen, he is incapable of loving God whom he has not seen. We have this command from Christ: **whoever loves God must love his fellow-Christian too.** (REB)

6. DIVISIONS OF UNDERSTANDING IN CHRISTENDOM

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should never have become a source of disagreement and division in the Church. For though we may not fully understand the meaning and importance of this Sacrament, still Christ's words are plain: "This is my Body"; "This is my blood"; "given and shed for you."

Despite this, there is a great deal of disagreement over the meaning of Christ's words (and St. Paul's), and therefore over the meaning of the Lord's Supper itself. Some have changed its **sacramental** character (what God does for us), into a **sacrifice** which man offers to God. Others have interpreted Christ's words as being **merely symbolic**, in which case the Lord's Supper is deprived of much of its meaning. The three most common views of the Lord's Supper are shown in the following diagram.

| SYMBOLIC VIEW | THE REAL PRESENCE | TRANSUBSTANTIATION |
|--|---|---|
| Held in some form by many Protestant Churches. | The belief of the Lutheran Church and part of the Episcopal Church, and by individual Christians in various denominations. | The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Eastern Church. |
| <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood | <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood | <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood |
| The body and blood of Christ are not actually present. They are merely symbolized by the elements. | The body and blood of Christ are present together with the bread and wine - received in faith, sacramentally. | The bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, *and are then offered by the priest as a sacrifice for sins. *(no longer taught by all these churches) |

Love Will Keep Memory Alive

When memory dies, love does too. You have perhaps read of the strange case of a man who had a wife and family; then lost his memory completely through amnesia; married again and settled down to a new life. Now, the newspapers report, he has been found, but he has no desire to return to his former wife and children even though his second wife is willing to have their marriage annulled. Why doesn't this man want to return to his first wife and children?—because he doesn't **remember** them at all. It would mean leaving a wife whom he loves and going back to a wife and children who are now total strangers to him. It would be almost impossible to do, except perhaps out of a sense of duty. The first wife and children would like to have him back. Why? Because they remember him, and the love they have for him has never died. But for him, **since memory is gone, all love is gone too.**

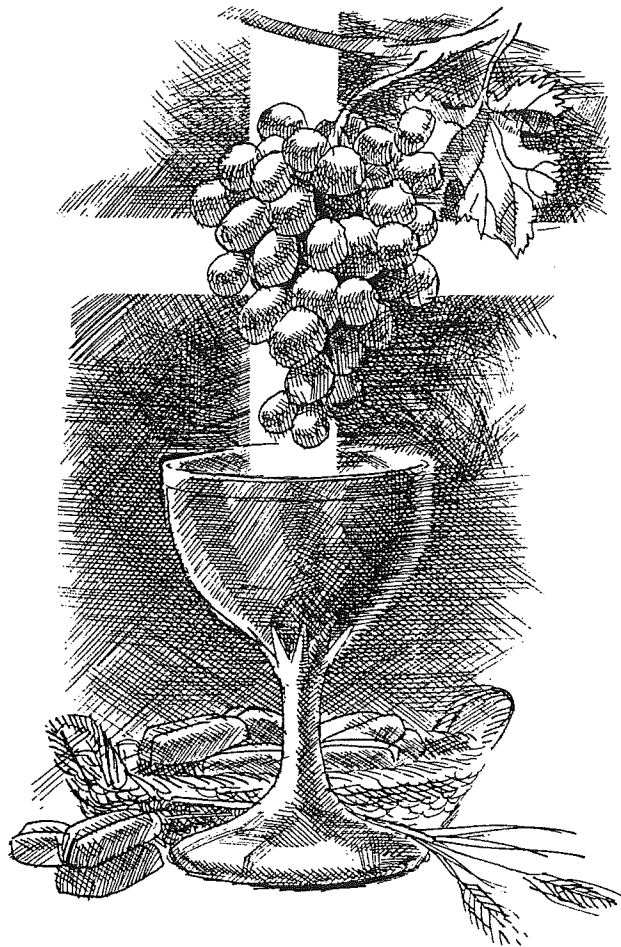
So in the Lord's Supper, Christ asks all Christians to **remember** the love which He has shown for us when He died for us upon the cross. And only as long as we **remember**, will we love.

– Henry F. Fingerlin

7. THE SACRAMENT IS TO BE RECEIVED FREQUENTLY

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be received often by the believing Christian, since Christ's words indicate that this is a Sacrament to be received frequently by the believing Christian. Christ said, "Do this," not, "neglect this."

I Cor. 11:24-26 ..."Do this in remembrance of me"... "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (NRSV)



"O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the most strong. We call Thee our Savior and Redeemer, since Thou didst come to earth to loose us from the fetters wherewith we are bound, or wherewith we have bound ourselves, and to save the lost. This was Thy work; and Thou hast completed it and shalt complete it till the end of the world."

– Soren Kierkegaard

WORKSHEET FOR CHAPTER XV (PAGE 1)

1. ON THE BASIS OF THIS LESSON, CAN YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS?

1. What are some of the other **names** for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?
2. On what **occasion** did Christ institute this **Sacrament**?
3. What does the believing participant **receive** in the Lord's Supper?
4. What do we **experience and express** by partaking of the Lord's Supper?
5. What words of the Apostle Paul indicate that the Lord's Supper should not be given to **small children** or persons who are **unconscious**?
6. When is a person **worthy, or unworthy**, of receiving the Lord's Supper?
7. Describe the **three major interpretations** of the Lord's Supper that are taught by various churches.
8. What indication do we have that we should receive this Sacrament **frequently**?

2. A PROBLEM FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Someone has not attended the Lord's Supper for many years. When questioned about this, he informs you that the reason is that he feels unworthy because he can always think of some sin he has committed that makes him unworthy to receive the Sacrament. How would you reply to this?
2. Below is the same diagram which occurs in the chapter. Cross out the words, "Bread - Wine" or "Body - Blood" to fit the interpretation of the denominations represented. Leave the words where the interpretation for each denomination is correct.

| SYMBOLIC VIEW | THE REAL PRESENCE | TRANSUBSTANTIATION |
|--|---|--|
| Held in some form by many Protestant Churches. | The belief of the Lutheran Church and part of the Episcopal Church, and by individual Christians in various denominations. | The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Eastern Church. |
| <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood | <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood | <u>Bread - Wine</u> Body - Blood |
| The body and blood of Christ are not actually present. They are merely symbolized by the elements. | The body and blood of Christ are present together with the bread and wine - received in faith, sacramentally. | The bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. |

WORKSHEET FOR CHAPTER XV (PAGE 2)

Christ was celebrating the Jewish Passover for the last time with His Disciples, and it was during this Passover celebration that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper. This is significant because there is a deep inner connection between the Passover and the Lord's Supper. Notice the following similar characteristics between the Passover and the Lord's Supper, and then look up the Bible passages and fill in the blanks.

1. **THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PASSOVER, AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST AND PARTICIPATE IN HIS SACRIFICE ARE DELIVERED FROM PUNISHMENT.**

A. From what were the Jewish People delivered when they put the blood of the sacrificed Lamb on their doorposts and lintels? See *Exodus 12:22-23*:

B. From what are we delivered by the Blood of Christ shed on the Cross?

I John 1:7: _____

Romans 5:9: _____

2. **BOTH THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER TOOK PLACE ON THE EVENING BEFORE GOD ACCOMPLISHED A MIGHTY DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE.**

A. **What great event** took place after the Jewish people had celebrated the first Passover Meal? See *Exodus 12:29-51; Exodus 14:21-22*.

B. **What Great Act of Deliverance** did God Accomplish on the Day after Christ instituted the Lord's Supper? See *Mark 15:33-39; Colossians 1:13*.

3. **BOTH THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER WERE TO BE CELEBRATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN ORDER TO COMMEMORATE A PAST EVENT. WRITE THE WORDS WHICH SHOW THAT BOTH COMMEMORATE A PAST EVENT, AND TELL WHAT THAT EVENT WAS. (BOTH HAVE Teaching SIGNIFICANCE).**

A. *Exodus 12:14; 12:17; 12:26-27*: _____

B. *I Cor. 11:24 and 26*: _____

4. **BOTH THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER INVOLVE EATING THE "LAMB" WHOSE SACRIFICED BLOOD HAS SAVED THE PARTICIPANTS FROM DESTRUCTION. WRITE THE WORDS WHICH ILLUSTRATE THIS.**

A. *Exodus 12:8* _____

B. *I Corinthians 10:16-17* _____
