

Lord's Day 30a, QA 81, 82

**2 May 2010**

Sermon Notes by Pastor Paul Goh

Beloved, the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of the spiritual inward reality of the blessing of God in the heart of the believers. The broken bread and poured out wine represents the broken bread that was sacrificed for us. And the Lord's Supper is confirmation that the spiritual blessings of the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and membership in the covenant of grace that is ours, by faith. How is Christ present in the Lord's Supper? Christ is spiritually present in the elements by his grace and spirit. He is also present in the minister of God who breaks the bread and distributes the wine.

The proper partakers of the Lord's Supper is an important question because those who are proper partakers eat merely the bread and merely drink the wine and not the body and blood of Christ. Furthermore, these also eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. As such, it is very important for the elders to guard the table of the Lord. Thus, it is wrong to have an open invitation to everyone present to partake of the Lord's Supper: this is called open communion. And it is also wrong for parents to give to their babies and little children a little bread or crackers after dipping it in grape juice. Nor is it right to severely limit that only a handful members can partake, but only those who are worthy communicants ought to come and partake of the elements.

The theme is proper partakers of the Lord's Supper. First, who should partake? Secondly, who should not partake? Finally, who decides?

First, who should partake? Those who conduct a self – evaluation of their own hearts. The need to conduct this spiritual exercise according to the teaching of Scripture. In I Cor. 11.27, 28, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup". The need for self-examination comes from the fact that you can eat and drink at the table of the Lord unworthily. And so through the process of self-examination before we partake of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, we eat the bread and drink the wine worthily. This is important because we drink damnation to ourselves if we do not discern the Lord's body. And this happened at Corinth. The Corinthian church had the practice of holding a love or agape feast at the church before they came to the Supper of the Lord. And they brought food to the feast. The rich brought food and the poor could not afford to bring any food. And instead of partaking at the feast together so that the rich could share their food with the poor, they went ahead to feast on the food, leaving the poor with nothing to eat. And even the rich became drunk with wine. Thus, the Corinthians were not in a spiritual frame of mind to partake of the Lord's Supper. And hence the need for them to examine themselves in order to partake of the Lord's Supper worthily and not receive the damnation of the Lord. What is self-examination? What self-examination is not? It is not asking ourselves whether we believe in Jesus Christ. Self-

examination is not asking ourselves whether we are the children of God or are we asking whether we have faith. Rather, according to II Cor. 13.5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Proper self-examination is the examination of our confession and the life as a child of God. You ask yourself whether you are confessing the faith rightly, in harmony of the Holy Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions; and you wholeheartedly believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God; and the Holy Scriptures alone teach you that you ought to believe concerning God, his only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit. And that you believe in the harmony of the Reformed Confessions. And you ask whether your walk in this faith is harmony of that confession. This refers to your conduct as children of God. Are you living out this faith in your life? So, by your life, are you confessing the truths of the Reformed Faith. Remember that the truth of God ought to be seen in your life. And the truth of living a clean and chaste life ought to be seen also in your adornment for the ladies and men. By your clothing, are you consistent with your Christian testimony? Are you testifying that you are a child of God by your dress? And you must also ask how do others think of me? What do the church members think of my confession? What do my friends and relatives think of my confession? Am I living a life in harmony in what I believe?

What is it that we are to examine ourselves? That we see in our hearts great corruption and sins which are not only disobedience but also rebellion against God. We commit these sins because we are sinners: to sin is in our nature for we are born in sin. And thus, we sorrow for our sins. That we do not enjoy our sins nor are we continuing in our sins. And thus, we grieve in our hearts for our sins, for we love our sins so much and we see a lack of interest in spiritual things: in worshipping God from our hearts in reading the Scriptures, in loving God's church. And as such we mourn for our sins but we remember that there is hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. There is forgiveness for the greatest of sinners. We know that the Lord will grieve us as he forgave the one who only persecuted the church but became one of the greatest apostles in the New Testament. He is Apostle Paul and he is our encouragement. And the sure ground of our forgiveness is the work of Christ on the cross. Christ took our curse and the punishment that is due unto us upon his body so that we can be forgiven and be innocent in His sight. You earnestly desire to have your faith strengthened and live more holy. We do not come to the table of the Lord to express that we have made it spiritually or that we are righteous, or that we are righteous and hence we are good enough to be partakers of the table. Rather, we come to the table because we desperately need it: our faith is so weak and needs to be strengthened. Our love for God is so small and needs to be enlarged and my life is so unholy and I want a holier life. And those who do not have this testimony in their hearts must stay away from the table of the Lord.

In addition, who should not partake? Hypocrites. They refer to those who do not turn unto God with a sincere heart. He lives with two masks. When he goes to Church he puts on a pious mask when in reality he is not. His Christian life is all for show for others to see but in his heart God is not real.

Besides Sunday, he does not think about God. His bible gathers dust. He does not pray. Why does he live such a hypocritical life? He wants to show others that he is godly when he is not. He wants to impress upon others his knowledge of the Reformed Theology but his spiritual life is empty. Concerning these, Isaiah said that they draw unto me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.

They are those who claim to be believers but they are just hanging on and have no interest in the things of God. They show up in the worship service, but they sleep through the sermon and the only thing they remember is "Amen, let us pray" at the end of the sermon and its time for lunch. They just do enough to please the elders so those elders would not come knocking upon their doors. Or they go to church not because their heart is there, but because they are born in the church and they have been doing it for so many years. And in case the elders did not spot them, they would appear just in front of them and say, "here I am" and to mark their attendance. And beloved people of God, if this description fits you and you are convicted of your sins, what do you do? Do you stay away from the supper of the Lord? No. Confess your sins, trust in Christ, who died your yours sins as it is presented in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. Though your sins have slain you by convicting you of your sins, he will also heal you, so that you will be a worthy partaker of the Supper of the Lord. But for those who are hypocrites, they ought not to come because they will eat and drink judgment unto themselves.

God will judge those who are not worthy partakers of the table of the Lord. This is because our Lord is holy, without sin and utterly devoted to his glory. And he instituted the sacraments as holy signs and seals. The broken body signifies the broken body and the poured out wine signifies the poured out wine. And these elements are seals or confirmation that you do receive the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life. And Christ is present in the Supper of the Lord, symbolically in the bread and wine, in the minister of God who breaks the bread and pours out the wine and distributes it to the congregation by the hands of the elders. And he instituted the Lord's Supper so that his disciples would remember his death on the cross. This is because this is the holy supper of the Lord, which is for the people of God who has been sanctified by the blood of Christ and in the heart of the saints that the Spirit of Christ dwells. God will judge those unworthy partakers because they have not discerned the Lord's body. Discerning the Lord's body means that they understand and believe the doctrine concerning Christ and the doctrine concerning his death on the cross and they understand the significance of the Lord's Supper. And when the apostle says that many are weak, sickly and even sleep, he speaks of God's judgment upon these unworthy partakers of the Supper. God takes a serious view to the partaking of the Lord's supper. And those who are not worthy ought not to partake.

But who decides who should come to partake and who should not come to partake? It is not for the individual Christian to decide. There are many in the church who thinks that the partaking of the Lord's Supper is between them and God, and has got nothing to do with the believers in that congregation and no one should judge their personal lives. They have committed the error

of individualism, ignoring that they are the members of the body of Christ in the communion of the saints. Why is this wrong? First, no one should separate the Lord's Supper from the preaching of that word. The preaching of God's Word is the chief means of grace and that Word calls his people to one faith, one Lord and only those who confesses this one faith and one Lord can partake of this Supper. In the Supper, believers express that oneness not only with the Lord but also with the church that administers the Lord's Supper. Both the preaching of the Word and Supper are one as the Supper confirms the blessings of the preached Word as the visible word. Secondly, they could eat and drink judgment unto themselves for not believing the true doctrine of Christ. For many deny the divine nature of Christ, the three distinct persons of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: deny that Christ died only for the elect and deny that believers and their children are in the covenant.

The elders decide as a consistory. They alone hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Individual believers do not hold the keys because they have not been entrusted with that authority. What are the keys of the kingdom? They are the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline. By the use of the keys, we unlock to enter into our homes and we lock to prevent thieves from coming into our homes. And in the same way, by the use of these keys, the elders open the kingdom of heaven to believers and shut them against unbelievers. And on the basis of the exercise of the keys of the kingdom, elders bar the unbelieving and the ungodly from the Table of the Lord. And if the elders are lax in this area, then the covenant of God will be profaned and the wrath of God comes upon the congregation. Remember Achan: because of his sin, Israel lost her battle against Ai for God's judgment came upon Israel for Achan's sin. The elders too must not allow children to partake of the supper. There are those who say that these covenant children have faith and they are in the covenant and therefore have the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. Children are to be barred from the Lord's Supper for they cannot discern the Lord's body and cannot understand the significance of the bread and wine at the table. And if Reformed believers from other congregations ask to come to the table. The elders must insist upon a letter from the consistory of that church, of which he is a member, testifying to his godly walk and life. This would mean that he is a baptised believer and a member of good standing in the local church .

Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, are you a proper partaker of the table of the Lord? Then, come with love burning in your heart for your Saviour. Eat and drink with full confidence in the perfect work of Christ on the cross: that your faith will be nourished and strengthened, be assured that God dwells in you and you in him and thus you are the children of God. Amen,