

## Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

### The Danger of Idolatry

1. In the sixteenth century, John Calvin was driven to rid the church of elements of idolatry, which he found in the Roman Catholic way of celebrating the mass.
  - *1 Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 16 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? 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? 19 What say I then? That the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*
2. Paul gives very strong warning about mixing up the celebration of the Lord's Supper with acts of idolatrous practices.
3. Some of the Christians in Corinth were participating in pagan feasts, and festivals.
4. This led to the question of the conscience of some Christians being violated over eating meat offered to idols, for some Christians were bringing the meat they had offered to idols to the Love Feast.
5. Some Christians of scruples decided they were not going to eat any meat, offered to any idol, in any way.
6. When the apostle Paul addressed the issue, he acknowledged there was nothing inherently sinful about the meat. How meat was used after it went on sale in the market place should not cause Christians any great concern. The principle of Christian conscience was established.
7. What Paul did prohibit was the actual participation of a Christian in offering meat to an idol. That was wrong.
8. To buy meat that had been offered to an idol by a pagan had no bearing on the conscience of a Christian, for food is food. But Christians were not to engage in acts of idolatry for any reason.
9. The mixing of idolatry elements were not to be mixed in the Lord's Supper.
10. For the Reformers, with respect to the issue of Transubstantiation, elements of idolatry were discerned to be taking place as the human nature of Christ was being deified. This was a subtle form of idolatry, according to Calvin.

11. While Christ is worshipped as a person, the heart of the Christian does not extrapolate His human nature to exalt it, deify it, and worship it.
12. To worship the human nature of Jesus would be to commit idolatry, because it would be to ascribe to the created aspect of Jesus, the attributes of God.
13. This is forbidden, because it is what the ungodly do. The glory of God is changed into a creature, and the creature is exalted.
  - *Romans 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*
14. Christ, the person, is worthy of worship because of His divine nature. To worship Christ the creature, in his human nature, is idolatry.
15. The theology of Catholicism concerned Calvin, as did the practice of genuflecting towards the Tabernacle, a golden box, which contains the consecrated host.

***Special Note.***

A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration.

16. The host becomes the body of Christ. To genuflect, is to bow before the consecrated host which is elevated in the mass to indicate its sanctity, and supernatural divinity. The Reformers viewed this is an act of idolatry.
17. Once a year, the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Corpus Crisiti (Body of Christ).
18. This feast is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday to commemorate the consecrated host.
19. Another concern for the Reformers was what actually happened in the drama of the mass when the host was lifted up.
20. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that what happens in the mass is the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.
21. This is a clear contradiction of the Bible, which declares that Christ was offered once for all at Calvary.
  - *Hebrews 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*
22. Rome teaches that the repetitious sacrifice of Christ is done in an unbloodied way. However, His sacrifice is real, and repetitious.

23. For the Reformers, to repeat the atoning work of Christ at Calvary, is to denigrate the value of the once for all atonement that had been made.
24. At the Council of Trent, the Latin word used to describe the mass is *sacrificium*, or sacrifice. Rome teaches that Christ is sacrificed, though the sacrifice is unbloodied.
25. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic teachings of the mass, and the practices associated with it.

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IV. Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone; as likewise the denial of the cup to the people; worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

26. Paul moves on from 1 Corinthians 10, to give even stronger warnings in 1 Corinthians 11.
- *1 Corinthians 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.*

**The Necessity of Division**

*19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

**Gluttony and Selfishness**

*20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. 22 What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

**The Lord's Supper Instituted**

*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: 24 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. 25 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. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

## **Judgment**

*27 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. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

## **A Final Exhortation**

*33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

27. The Lord's Supper had become an occasion for unbridled gluttony and self-centeredness, in a community that was to be known for love and worship.
28. Paul had to address the mixture of idolatry with the Lord's Supper, and the diminishing of the dignity, and sanctify of the ceremony.
29. The Lord's Supper was not designed to be a church picnic, with a view to gluttony. It was to be a solemn occasion.
30. When the Reformers studied the Lord's Supper, they came to the conclusion that a principle should be established called, the fencing of the Lord's Table.
31. The fencing of the Lord's Table takes various forms.
  - A word of exhortation. In some congregations, a word of warning is given not to partake of the Lord's Supper if a person is not a true believer, or is not walking with the Lord.
  - Closed communion. In some congregations participation in the Lord's Supper is not allowed unless a person is a member.
32. Ideally, the reason for the fencing of the Lord's Table, is not to exclude individuals, but to protect them from the judgment of partaking communion in an unworthy manner.
33. To participate of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is to receive, not a cup of blessing, but a cup of cursing.
34. God will not be mocked if people come in an unworthy way to celebrate the most sacred of activities in the church.

- 35.** Sickness and death are forms of God's judgment upon those who do not properly discern the taking of communion.
- 36.** One reason why many Reformed churches do not allow paedocommunion, is because of this principle of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. Children are protected from participating in things they do not understand.

***Special Note.***

Of course, this does not stop many Reformed parents from letting their infants participate in the holy ordinance of baptism, even though they do not understand that either.

- 37.** The proper attitude for partaking of the Lord's Supper is that of humility, and repentance.