

# Heidelberg Catechism 81-82 – The Lord’s Supper and Discipline

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Have you ever smelled a savory smell in your neighborhood...maybe someone grilling some nice pork chops...or some curried goat...or whatever you like? If you get that smell you know someone is going to be happy...but not you...because you weren’t invited. Those who are invited will enjoy a mouth-watering meal. But why didn’t your neighbor invite you? Maybe he just didn’t want to. Maybe he didn’t have enough food. Or maybe he doesn’t like you because your dandelion 蒲公英seeds are always floating over to his lawn.

God also has a meal – fellowship meal – and he has enough for the world, but he only invites **people who are on good terms with him** to eat his meal. Others he keeps out. Why doesn’t he offer his Holy Supper to everyone? Well, in most churches the Lord’s Supper is given to whoever wants it without sufficient regard to whether he were qualified. The elements are simply passed around. Sometimes there is a token warning about improper use of the Sacrament, but not much more. It is wrong to offer God’s meal to those who are unworthy receivers. The unworthy recipient is eating stolen food. Today you will hear from God’s Word why some are unworthy and are not invited to this Holy Feast – the Lord’s Supper.

Our headings are: **Who Participates in the Lord’s Table**, and **Who is Prevented from eating at the Lord’s Table**.

Our goals are: **That you will hold it a privilege 特权 to eat at the Lord’s table and make sure you stay in good relations with your Lord to continue to enjoy it.**

## Who participates in the Lord’s Table

Q&A 81 Who are to come to the Lord's table?

*Those who are **displeased with themselves** because of their sins, but who nevertheless **trust that their sins are pardoned** and that their **continuing weakness** is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also **desire more and more to strengthen their faith** and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.*

1. Those who are in good relations with the Lord are permitted, and encouraged to come to the table of the Lord and feast. (I use the word feast because God describes it that way. “Feast” shows abundance of that which is good. The meal might seem insignificant with a small piece of bread and a little wine, but it is indeed an eating of the body of Christ.) So you if you are not in good relations with the Lord you are not permitted to come to his banqueting table...and you should not want to come...and it would be a shame for you to come to eat at a table of someone whom you treat poorly...or with whom you refuse to talk?

1Corinthians 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

And isn’t it true that eating is better when you have no stress? Who enjoys a meal with tensions?  
Proverbs 21:9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious 有争议woman.

Proverbs 17:1 Better is a dry morsel 一口 with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife 争吵.

2. What do I mean when I say that you must have a “good relationship” with the Lord before eating?

a. **Being in a good relationship with the Lord does not mean you are perfect** or that you have perfectly obeyed God’s law. No one then would then be able to eat...but believers are to eat of it.

b. **Being in a good relationship with the Lord means you are displeased with yourself**, knowing that you have sinned against the Lord and others. You are displeased with yourself because you are aware of your guilt – of thoughts, words, and actions.

1Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an **unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself**, not discerning 辨别 the Lord’s body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge

ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

c. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means you **trust in Christ** and that you are assured he has forgiven all your sins through his death on the cross.

d. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means you are aware that you have **continuous weaknesses**. This implies that you continually examine your life in bright light of God's Word. When you realize your sins, you repent. In so doing, you are spared from judgment that comes for improperly taking of the Lord's Fellowship meal. For sure, you realize that of yourself you are unworthy to come before Lord.

e. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means and you **desire that the Lord strengthen your faith** and help you to live a better life. He does this by nourishing your soul. This meal satisfies the inner longing of your soul. You are really receiving the assurance that Christ died for you personally.

### 3. What is the role of elders regarding who is permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper?

- a. Elders are to **call each believer to regularly examine himself** and make sure that he is fully aware of Christ's work for him. So elders are to guard this holy food from getting into vessels that are not ready for it and encourage those who are not permitted to take it to drawn near to Jesus Christ and ask him to make them his children so they are permitted to share this holy food.
- b. Elders are to encourage young people to make profession of faith so that they can share in the Lord's Supper as well.

### **Who should be prevented from the Lord's Table**

Q&A 82 Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who **show by what they say and do** that they are unbelieving and ungodly? *No*, that would **dishonor God's covenant** and bring down **God's anger upon the entire congregation**. Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and His apostles, *the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.*

#### 1. Those who do not show that they are believing and godly must be prevented from taking the Lord's Supper.

A man shows that he does not believe in Jesus Christ if he is living in a state of rebellion against God. And he must know that while he is in that state of rebellion he is under the condemnation of God. God gave us a good example of guarding his holy food when he put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden lest they would have eaten of the Tree of Life.

#### 2. Why is it wrong to allow those living in rebellion to Christ to take the Lord's Supper?

- a. If elders allowed an unworthy eater to participate in this holy meal it would cause them to **dishonor the covenant and the God who gave that covenant**. It is to spit at the work of Christ and **treat his redemption of man as an insignificant thing**.
- b. If elders allowed those who showed a continued defiance against God's law to participate in this holy meal this would subject the unworthy eater to **God's severe anger and judgment**. This judgment affects the members of the congregation as well as his family. Sin in the camp is always harmful to the body. Whenever harmony is threatened the whole congregation suffers. Remember Psalm 133. Unity takes over and spreads joy.

1Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. **29** For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. **30** For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. **32** But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

#### 3. **To withhold the Lord's Supper from those living in continuous rebellion is for those people's own good.** To withhold the Lord's Supper from those in rebellion is not a punishment per se or

revenge, but at restorative恢复action. Look at the hope the Lord had for Israel as he testified concerning them after they rebelled and misused his ordinances教仪.

Isaiah 1:11 "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "**I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle**. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. 12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? 13 Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.16 "**Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil,** 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

God did not want token animal sacrifices from his people; good as the animals were. He wanted heartfelt worship from his people. So to withhold the Lord's Supper from those living in continuous rebellion is intended therefore to make them rethink the vow they made before the Lord to rest in him, and to return to him for forgiveness for their acts of rebellion. God does want the offender to feel guilty so that he might repent and return fully.

Psalms 50:14 **Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.** 15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." 16 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth,

5. So in order to protect the honor of God and to protect the unworthy receiver from judgment, **elders guard the Lord's Table.** This means the elders must make reasonable efforts to prevent the Lord's Supper from being received unworthily. This is why our elders pass out the elements themselves and do not use congregants to pass the elements. (See how being polite and passing the plate around can be bad.) Elders do this to protect you. Furthermore, elders interview anyone who is not a member to make sure they are a true believer who is not under discipline in another congregation.

6. This **judgment is limited to what the elders of the church see and hear.** The elders do not know what is in the heart, but they judge by what they see coming out of the heart.

### **Conclusion:**

The Lord's Supper is not for the perfect, but for those who recognize that Jesus Christ obeyed the covenant for them and is the Lord of their lives – meaning that they endeavor to subject themselves to him. Those who reject Jesus as Lord and do not submit to him and his under-shepherds (elders and deacons) are therefore to be denied the food of Jesus Christ. The rebellious will only get this nourishing food as soon as they begin to submit to the Lord.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: What a privilege you have to eat at the Lord's Table regularly! What nourishment营养comes to your soul! You see and hear afresh重新what the Lord has done for you and your soul is strengthened. I pray to God that you will stay in good relations with the Lord so you can always enjoy his benefits. And if you do stray, that you come back to him...with urgency and sincerity. How sad if you rob yourself of the food of life! How said if you absent yourself from this heavenly food!

Finally, if you are not a believer let me remind you that the food of the Lord's Supper – a food that you need- cannot be yours. It cannot be yours because you don't believe that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. May the message of Christ's death on the cross sink into your heart today so that your soul might not only be saved from the horrors of hell, but that it might be nourished in this world today.