

HC 81-82 – Guarding Christ’s Honor and your Health

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Have you ever smelled something savory in your neighborhood...maybe someone grilling pork chops...or cooking some curried goat...or whatever meat you find delicious? Then you look out and see someone is having a party but you were not invited. Those who were invited taste a mouth-watering meal but not you. And you hear them talking and laughing as they celebrate.

So you ask yourself why you weren’t invited. Then you remember that your dandelion seeds are always floating over to your neighbor’s lawn, or maybe you knocked over his trash can with your car, or maybe your yard looks like a garbage dump and you are decreasing his property value! You are not on good terms so he won’t let you touch that meat or share good times.

Similarly, God has a most nutritious meal – a spiritual 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. Today you will hear from God’s Word the details of why some are invited and why some are not invited to this precious Holy Feast – the Lord’s Supper.

Our headings are:

Who participates in eating at the Lord’s Table

Who is prevented from eating at the Lord’s Table.

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

Who participates in eating at the Lord’s Table

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

A. 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 that 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 a spiritual feasting by the body of Christ.)

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 woman.

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

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

To be 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.

a. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means you are displeased with yourself for sinning against God 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 the Lord's body.

b. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means that you now trust in Christ to forgive you all your sins through his death on the cross. This makes peace with the Father.

d. Being in a good relationship with the Lord means that even as you still have continued weaknesses, you are assured that God will

forgive you all your sins. Because all your sins are forgiven, you are spared from judgment that comes for those who take the Lord's Supper and are still in their sins. (And this is a wonderful experience, as you realize you have no right of yourself to come to the Lord's Table. You've tried to sow dandelions on God's property...but he continues to forgive you and invites you because Jesus paid for all your sins!)

e. **Being in a good relationship with the Lord means and you are sure the Lord will continue to 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.

f. Being in a good relationship with the Lord mean you are visibly **committed to the Lord by being a part of his bride.** You will not be a visitor. No visitor is seen as a bride!!! You will fight to be faithful to the Lord. This is the "better life."

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

a. **Elders call a believer to regularly examine himself** and make sure he is fully aware of Christ's work for him personally.

b. **Elders guard this holy food from getting into vessels that are not ready for it** and have no right to it. They encourage those who are not permitted to eat of this Holy Supper to draw near to Jesus and ask him to make them his children so they are permitted to share his holy food.

c. **Elders encourage young people to make profession of faith so they can share in the Lord's Supper.** Profession of Faith confirms their commitment to the Savior. Elders can't assume those who are in the invisible church. They can only judge by outward life and testimony.

Who is prevented from Eating at 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?

A. 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 are not in good relations with the Lord are not permitted to come to his banqueting table. Isn't it a shame to eat at a table of someone whom you treat poorly... or with whom you refuse to talk? Would you want to eat with someone who is rebelling against you? God does not want these who are unrepentant and hypocrites to come to his table.

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?

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 ate 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 him 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. (Remember how Achan caused his whole family to die?) 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 is part of discipline.

To withhold the Lord's Supper from those in rebellion is not punitive or a revenge, but a restorative action. Look at the hope the Lord had for Israel as he testified concerning them after they rebelled and misused his ordinances.

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 to make them rethink the vow they made before the Lord. They must rest in him, and return to him for forgiveness for their acts of rebellion. God wants the offender to feel guilty so that he

might repent and return fully.

Psalm 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 he is a true believer, and member of a Christian church, and is not under discipline in another congregation.

Conclusion:

The Lord's Supper is not for the perfect, but for those who recognize that Jesus 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:

1. What a privilege you have to eat at the Lord's Table regularly! You hear afresh of Christ's sacrifice for you. You see the bread broken and the wine poured. You hold the elements in your hands. You taste the elements. You reflect on Christ sacrifice on the cross. Then your soul then is nourished...richly.

2. Pray to God that you will stay in good relations with him so you can

always enjoy his benefits. If you do stray, come back to him with sincerity. Remind yourself of his love so you will stay close to him. 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, the food of the Lord's Supper – 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 to pacify God's anger against you. Why not ask the Father to accept the peace Christ made for sinners on your behalf?