

Belgic Confession 35 – Lord’s Supper – What it really is!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There are 3 major views of the Lord’s Supper, or communion.

1. Some people see the Lord’s Supper as a simple memorial of the work of Jesus Christ. The view was advocated by men like Zwingli and is continued in most Baptist/Pentecostal type churches today.

2. Roman Catholic view the Lord’s Supper as having the power to help save you.

3. The proper view, which is the Reformed view, is that the Lord’s Supper is not simply a memorial, and it does not help to save you. You will hear today the details of the Bible’s teaching on the Lord’s Supper.

Our headings are:

What is purpose of the Lord’s Supper?

How are you able to receive the Benefits of the Lord’s Supper?

What are the elements of the Lord’s Supper?

Our goals are: **That you will yearn for the Lord’s Supper, rejoice that you can get it, and report for your Christian duty on a daily basis that you are equipped for service.**

What is the purpose of the Lord’s Supper?

We believe and confess that our **Savior Jesus Christ has ordained** and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper **to nourish and sustain** those who are **already born again** and **ingrafted** into his family: his church.

1. The Lord’s Supper focuses on the work of Christ on the cross – how Christ took God’s punishment in your place.

2. The Lord’s Supper reminds you that Christ took your punishment as your covenant keeper.

Luke 22: 19 And He **took bread**, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do **this in remembrance** of Me." 20 Likewise He also **took the cup** after supper, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant in My blood**, which is shed for you.

He came to die in your place and you must always remember that. But this is where our Baptist brothers stop. But look!

3. The Lord’s Supper is a means of sanctifying grace (not saving grace) which prepares you for your commission.

When you take the sacraments, the Holy Spirit works through them to strengthen your faith. Remember, the Sacraments are visible expressions of God’s Word...and they produce the same thing!

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

And from the inside he nourishes you. (See 1Corinthians 6:15-17).

John 15: 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 **"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.**

And the more you are cleaned out and strengthened, the more you will be equipped to focus on Christ's dominion!

The closer you are to your Lord, the more he will nourish you with good things and clean out your lusts.

Ephesians 5: 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 **For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.**

4. The Lord's Supper draws you closer to Christ – as often as you eat and drink it – and you want to know him better.

The more you talk to your spouse in deep conversation, the more you draw closer to him. It is similar with the Lord's Supper.

5. The Lord's Supper draws you closer together with brothers and sisters; it is a true expression of unity.

1Corinthians 10:16 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?

With this closeness – this unity - you are able to work better together to advance Christ's cause.

This further implies that those who are outside of the church rob themselves of these blessings.

6. The Lord's Supper brings you joy each time you eat it.

It is a celebration of your wonderful salvation. It authenticates you as a Christian.

7. Those (like those of the Black Stocking church) who refuse to eat it because they think they are unworthy, disregard the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

It is contempt to refuse to take the Lord's Supper or to be careless about receiving it. The Lord assumes your unworthiness.

The Lord assumes your inability to do what he has called you to do. **That is why he instituted the Lord's Supper.** He wants you to be fully strengthened for the task. To

refuse to eat it is to deny God's grace.

8. Because the benefits of the Lord's Supper are necessary for the Christian, those who refused to associate with the church are committing spiritual suicide!

How are you able to receive the Benefits of the Lord's Supper?

Now those who are born again have **two lives** in them. The **one is physical** and temporal— they have it from the moment of their first birth, and it is common to all. The **other is spiritual** and heavenly, and is given them in their second birth; it comes through the Word of the gospel in the communion of the body of Christ; and this life is common to God's elect only. Thus, to support the physical and earthly **life God has prescribed** for us an appropriate earthly and material bread, which is as **common to all** as life itself also is. But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life that belongs to believers he has sent a living bread that came down from heaven: namely Jesus Christ, who **nourishes and maintains the spiritual life of believers when eaten**—that is, when appropriated and received spiritually by faith.

1. Everyone needs food for daily life; everyone needs food for spiritual life.

No one can survive long or well without physical food, and neither can the soul survive long or well without spiritual food. That we have established!

2. Now the question is: How are you able to receive the benefits of the Lord's Supper – benefits that you truly need in order to advance his kingdom?

You must **receive the Lord's Supper with faith**. (The visible Word must always be **mixed with faith**.) You see, you might sit down at a table that is filled with the best meats and vegetables...and lots of desserts...**but smelling them is not sufficient**. You have to actually eat them to enjoy them.

3. It was by faith the children of Israel ate the Passover meal – which was the origin of the Lord's Supper.

They would eat the lamb and unleavened bread – which pictured Jesus...and eat the bitter herbs... that pictured Jesus' intense suffering at the end of his life. It was by faith **they painted the blood of the lamb...that pictured Jesus' blood**...on their door posts...to signify their faith in the coming Savior.

4. Similarly, when you receive the elements (the bread and the wine) of the Lord's Supper by faith – you are spiritually eating the body and blood of the Lord.

In other words, you internalize the death of Jesus Christ for you. The Lord's Supper then becomes a source of nourishment for you. This causes the Lord's Supper to become **a means of grace** to you. The Holy Spirit works in his unique, mysterious way through the visible Word that you receive by faith.

Now it is certain that Jesus Christ **did not prescribe his sacraments for us in vain**, since he works in us all he represents by these holy signs, although the manner in which he does it goes beyond our understanding and is incomprehensible to us, just as the operation of God's Spirit is hidden and incomprehensible.

5. Those who simply see the Lord's Supper as a matter of ritual observance – with no faith - a ceremony alone, with no gracious benefits, are treating it with contempt and robbing it of its rightful splendor, and at the same time, they are robbing themselves of the benefits.

They remain weak and lose the ability to fight for the kingdom as they should.

6. Those who take the Lord's Supper but don't believe in Jesus, even if they are members of the church, and may believe they are members of Christ, bring judgment on themselves.

It is treating God with great contempt. It is eating stolen food. Would God be pleased with such wickedness? Surely not!

Hebrews 11:28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who **destroyed** the firstborn should touch them.

What are the Elements of the Lord's Supper?

To represent to us this spiritual and heavenly bread Christ has instituted an earthly and **visible bread** as the sacrament of his body and **wine** as the sacrament of his blood. He did this to testify to us that just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life,

1. There are 2 elements in the Lord' Supper, both of which are non-bloody, as there is no need for blood.

a. Bread – an earthly visible bread. This reminds you of the Lord's body that was broken for you. The body of Jesus Christ was pictured by the unleavened bread the Israelites ate with the meat of the Passover lamb and bitter herbs. Twelve loaves of bread were kept on the table in the Tabernacle and Temple, picturing Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem – House of Bread. Jesus Christ called himself the "Bread of Life." Bread is a basic necessity for life. Bread symbolized God's providential care, so it was a perfect sign. Remember Jesus' words as he broke the bread: "This is my body..."

b. Wine – an earthly visible wine. This reminds you of the Lord's blood that was spilled for you. Christ's blood was pictured earlier by the blood of the lamb that was killed and painted on the doors posts of the Israelites' homes. But this covenant sign has an even

earlier beginning in the Garden of Eden after Adam fell into sin. God shed the blood of the animal and made coverings of his people. The Old Testament sacrifices were bloody as well. Red wine is now most appropriate as it is a drink of celebration.

2. Further, breaking bread shows a kinship...a covenant relationship.

No one sits down to break bread with his enemy. The Lord himself appeared to Abraham and had a meal with him. He does so with his children today...regularly.

3. These elements must be held with your hands and eaten and drunk by your mouths in order to complete the things they signify.

What do hand and mouth signify? They signify faith - faith by which you receive these elements. Faith is the hand and mouth of your souls. Being fed directly is inappropriate. It weakens the sign.

Conclusion:

You need the Lord's Supper for nourishment so you can properly do the work the Lord has called you to do. What work? To rejoice in him, to worship him, and to spread the Good News of salvation to the world – so the world might glorify him. But **for you to be nourished by the Lord's Supper, you have to receive it by faith.** If you don't receive it by faith, then your soul will not be strengthened by it. Your confidence in Christ will not be as strong. You will be a malnourished person trying to lift a house...or fight a lion. You'll be mocking the Lord.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Long to be in church twice every Sunday for the Word and Sacrament. There are no shortcuts to being strong. Can you find a spiritually strong man or woman who does not worship regularly and hear and see the Gospel? God wants you regularly in worship to receive his benefits.

2. When you receive the Lord's Supper...and baptism as well...let your mind be drawn back to the cross and receive the blessing of seeing Christ's suffering for you. That will nourish your soul! That will make you stronger. That will make you more faithful. That will give you zeal. That will make you brave. That will make you work to advance Christ's kingdom.

Finally, if you are not in God's family, you must not take the Lord's Supper lest you endanger your life. But there is a way into the Christian family. If you ask God to make you his child, he will. That's it. God provides all the means by which you can enter. He puts your sins on Christ and he puts Christ's righteousness on you. Receive this blessed invitation.