

PART V  
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR  
CHAPTER XXXVII

I. *What is the Sacrament of the Altar?*

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself.

*Where is it so written?*

The holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, together with St. Paul, write thus: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

ITS NAMES. This sacrament is called: 1. The Sacrament of the Altar, because it is administered at the altar. 2. The Lord's Supper, because it was instituted by the *Lord* while the disciples were eating the Passover *Supper*. 3. The Table of the Lord, because the Lord here gives food and drink to our souls. 4. The Communion, because it is a communion of bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ, a communion of believers with one another. 5. The Eucharist--a name derived from a Greek word meaning to give thanks--because the administration of the Lord's Supper is attended with thanksgiving.

**WHAT THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR IS**

The Lord's Supper was instituted by **our Lord Jesus Christ the same night in which He was betrayed**, while He and the disciples were eating the Passover Supper.<sup>1</sup> What the Lord's Supper is, we learn from the words of Christ Himself as given by the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and by St. Paul.

THE EARTHLY ELEMENTS. The Lord **took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples. After the same manner also He took the cup** containing the wine, **when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them.** The earthly elements used in this sacrament are, therefore, bread and wine. The wafers which are generally used in Lutheran churches are unleavened bread--the kind which Christ used--because at the time of the Passover no other but unleavened bread dared be used by the Jews. The wine which Christ used was real wine, not unfermented grape juice. We are not permitted to substitute anything else in place of the earthly elements

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1 I Cor. 11:23-25. Matt. 26:26-28. Mark 14:22-24. Luke 22:19,20.

used by Christ in instituting this sacrament.

**THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.** When Christ gave His disciples the bread, **He said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you.** When He gave them the wine, **He said, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins.** Consequently, when we receive the bread in this sacrament, we receive also the body of Christ; and when we receive the wine, we receive also the blood of Christ. And we say of the Sacrament of the Altar, that

**It is the True Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under (along with) the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself.** The bread and wine *do not simply represent* the body and blood of Christ (Zwingli's view). The bread and wine are *not changed* into the body and blood of Christ (the Roman Catholic view, or transubstantiation). The bread and wine are not united with the body and blood of Christ into a third substance different from both (consubstantiation). The bread and wine remain real bread and wine throughout the administration of the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup> But there is a communion of the bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ,<sup>3</sup> so that when the communicant receives the bread he receives also the body of Christ, and when he receives the wine, he receives also the blood of Christ. The bread and wine are the earthly vehicles through which the heavenly gift of Christ's body and blood, which were given and shed for us for the remission of sins, are communicated to us.<sup>4</sup>

**DOCTRINES COMPARED.** The Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic doctrines of the Lord's Supper may be compared and illustrated thus:

<i>Reformed</i>	<i>Lutheran</i>	<i>Roman Catholic</i>
Bread— <del>Body</del>	Bread—Body	<del>Bread</del> —Body
Wine— <del>Blood</del>	Wine—Blood	<del>Wine</del> —Blood

According to the Reformed view only bread and wine are present; according to the Roman Catholic\* view, only the body and blood of Christ are present; according to the Lutheran and Scriptural doctrine, both the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ are present in the Holy Supper, and are received by every communicant.

**A GREAT MYSTERY.** The Lord's Supper is a great mystery; but also a great comfort. We cannot understand how Christ can give us His body and blood in this

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2 I Cor. 11:28.

3 I Cor. 10:16.†

4 I Cor. 11:28, 29.

\* Because of its false doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper, the Roman Catholic Church has fallen into these additional errors: 1. The Sacrifice of the Mass, in which the priest, by blessing the bread and wine, is supposed to turn them into the body and blood of Christ, and thus to offer an unbloody sacrifice of Christ which is as effective as Christ's death on the cross. 2. The withholding of the cup from the laity, lest a single drop of Christ's blood should be spilled. 3. The Elevation of the Host, in which the wafer or host is adored as the body of Christ.

sacrament. But it is the part of faith to take the Saviour at His word. This the Lutheran Church does in her doctrine.

QUESTIONS.--1. By what different names is this sacrament known and why? 2. From what do we learn what the Lord's Supper is? 3. What is to be said about the earthly elements? 4. When Christ gave His disciples the bread and the wine what did He say? 5. What do we receive, therefore, in the Lord's Supper? 6. What is to be said about Zwingli's view? 7. What is to be said about the Roman Catholic view, and what is it called? 8. What other false doctrine besides these two is to be rejected? 9. How may the Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic doctrines of the Lord's Supper be compared? 10. Is the true doctrine to be rejected because we do not understand it?

SCRIPTURE VERSES.--I Cor. 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?

READING.--The Institution of the Lord's Supper, Matt. 26:17-30.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### II. *What benefits are derived from such eating and drinking?*

They are pointed out in these words: “given and shed for you, for the remission of sins”; namely, through these words, the remission of sins, life and salvation are granted unto us in the sacrament. For where there is remission of sins, there are also life and salvation.

### **THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The benefits offered in this sacrament and bestowed upon all who receive it in faith **are pointed out in these words** of the institution: “**given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.**” Accordingly, the benefits are “**remission of sins, life and salvation.**” For while only the remission (forgiveness) of sins is mentioned in the institution, yet **where there is remission of sins, there are also life and salvation.**<sup>1</sup> The Lord's Supper confers all the benefits which Christ secured by His sufferings and death.<sup>2</sup> Each communicant is assured by the words of Christ Himself that the body which he receives along with the bread was given for *him*, and that the blood which he receives along with the wine was shed for *him*, for the remission of *his* sins. The promise of grace and forgiveness held out to all in the Gospel is thus brought home to each individual in the Lord's Supper. Each believing communicant is individually assured that Christ is *his* Saviour, and that *he* has the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through Christ's death.

### III. *How can the bodily eating and drinking produce such great effects?*

The eating and the drinking, indeed, do not produce them; but the words which stand here, namely, “given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” These words are besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief things in the sacrament; and he who believes these words has that which they declare and set forth; namely, the remission of sins.

### **WHY THE LORD'S SUPPER HAS POWER TO CONFER SUCH BENEFITS**

**The eating and the drinking, indeed, do not produce such great effects.** For bread and wine have no power in themselves to bestow spiritual blessings,

**But the Words which stand here, “given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.”** It is the Word of God which gives the sacrament its power.<sup>3</sup> For Christ has commanded us to use the bread and wine in this way, and has connected the promise of forgiveness with their use. Without the Word, there would be nothing but bread and wine. But Christ fulfils the promise which He has bound up with the **bodily eating and**

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1 Rom. 6:22.

2 Eph. 1:7.

3 John 6:63.

**drinking**, and gives us, with the bread and the wine, His body and blood which were given and shed for us for the remission of sins.

**And he who believes these Words has that which they declare,<sup>4</sup> namely, the remission of sins.** Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are offered to all who partake of this sacrament, but they are accepted and possessed only by those who believe. The impenitent and unbelieving, if they come to the Lord's Table, receive the body and blood of Christ also, but they receive it to their condemnation, because they do not receive it with a penitent and believing heart.<sup>5</sup>

IV. *Who is it that receives this sacrament worthily?*

Fasting and bodily preparation are, indeed, a good external discipline; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: “given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.” But he who does not believe these words or who doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.

### ***HOW THE LORD'S SUPPER IS TO BE RECEIVED***

Those who come to the Lord's Table must prepare themselves to come *worthily*, if they would receive the benefits offered in this sacrament.<sup>6</sup>

**Fasting and Bodily Preparation are indeed a Good External Discipline.** Fasting before the Lord's Supper is not required. It may be practiced by those who desire to do so, if they do it in order to fit themselves for a more earnest participation in the Holy Supper, and not with the idea that fasting constitutes a merit. The true preparation for the Lord's Supper is not bodily, but spiritual.<sup>7</sup>

**He is truly Worthy and Well-prepared, who believes these words, “given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.”** We are to come worthily, not in the sense of deserving, but of earnestly *desiring* the benefits offered in the sacrament. We come worthily when we come with penitent and believing hearts,<sup>8</sup>--lamenting our sins, longing for forgiveness and for strength to do better, and believing the words spoken to us, “given and shed for *thee* for the remission of sins.”

THE CONFESSORIAL SERVICE. The administration of the Lord's Supper is always preceded by the service of confession and absolution, so that those who desire to come to the Lord's Table may prepare themselves to come worthily. At this service we make a public confession of our sins, of our faith in Christ our Saviour, and of our earnest determination by God's grace to lead a holy life. Since Christ has conferred upon the Church the Power of the Keys, saying, “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,”<sup>9</sup> the minister uses this

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4 Matt. 8:13.

5 I Cor. 11:29.†

6 I Cor. 11:28.† II Cor. 13:5.

7 Joel 2:13.†

8 Ps. 51:17.† Matt. 11:28.†

9 John 20:23.

power and pronounces the absolution. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost he declares to all who truly repent and believe, the entire forgiveness of all their sins. On the other hand, to all who are impenitent and unbelieving he declares, that their sins are retained so long as they do not come to true repentance and faith.

Our Church does not require private confession of sins to the pastor; but if any one is troubled in conscience, and desires to make confession to the minister and to obtain the comfort of an absolution pronounced specially upon him, there is provision for private confession and absolution. Such private confessions are regarded by every true pastor as sacredly confidential. (See the “Questions on Confession,” which form one of the additions to the Five Principal Parts of the Catechism.)

QUESTIONS.--1. What are the benefits derived from the Lord's Supper? 2. Where are they pointed out? 3. How have these benefits been secured for us? 4. What assurance does each communicant receive? 5. Why has the Lord's Supper power to confer such benefits? 6. Does every communicant receive the benefits offered? 7. How is the Lord's Supper to be received? 8. What is to be said about fasting as a preparation? 9. What is the true preparation? 10. What is meant by receiving the Lord's Supper worthily? 11. Describe the confessional service? 12. What is to be said about private confession and absolution?

SCRIPTURE VERSES.--I Cor. 11: 29. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

I Cor. 11:29. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Ps. 51:17. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Matt. 11:28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest

Joel 2:13. And rend your heart, and not your

READING.--The Wedding Garment, Matt. 22:1-14