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COMMUNION WITH CHRIST
The Meaning of the Lord's Supper
By Ivan Anson Beals



Beacon Hill Press

Kansas City, Missouri

First Printing 1963

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Beacon Hill Press

Library Of Congress Card No. 64-10029

Printed In The United States Of America

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Holiness Data Ministry
Digital Edition 02-22-09
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FOREWORD

Around the supreme act of worship in our Christian faith a gifted young writer has gathered a wealth of vital truth and insight. The author has rightly seen in the Communion what another has said of the Cross: it is "the Crux of our Confession, the Focus of our Fellowship, and the Stimulus of our Sanctification."

In an age when so many try in vain to live by bread alone, we need this reminder that the sustenance of the soul and life of man is the Bread of Heaven, the Word which has come down from God to man.

Communion with Christ presents the gospel in epitome. What in the minds of some has become an arid and mechanical act without much meaning is made a window through which we may look into the very heart of God. The saving power of the atonement, the meaning of redemption, and the transforming power of Communion are found in the broken body and shed blood of our Lord.

Strengthened bonds of fellowship, stability, obedience, and love are among the fruits of Communion. There are both the knowledge of God's truth and a new commitment to Him in service. For all the importance of baptism, the central sacrament of the Church is the Lord's Supper. To those who participate with faith and understanding, there are hidden springs of inspiration and strength. In the fellowship of the Church we "do shew the Lord's death" in the anticipation of His coming again (I Cor. 12:26).

Let this little volume be an invitation into new and wider appreciation of the table of the Lord and the full supply for every need which He provides.

**W. T. Purkiser
Editor Herald Of Holiness**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgement is made to all who have kindly granted permission for quoted materials.

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01 -- INTRODUCTION

The concept of feeding on Christ is scriptural. To some it may be repulsive. But to the believer and follower of the Lord Jesus, His food is most necessary. Jesus Christ is himself the very substance of our salvation. Not only is He the Upholder of our physical existence, but He is also the Sustenance of our spiritual life. Thus Jesus is the Bread of heaven, and He is Meat and Drink to every sin-starved soul of Adam's race.

Our Lord's own words drive us to this humbling consideration. In John 6:53, He declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."* Hence there is no denying our continued dependence on Him.

[*Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the King James Version.]

Again, the Apostle Paul takes up this theme when he writes in terms of Christ being our Passover sacrificed for us (cf. I Cor. 5:7-8). Moreover, we are to keep the feast by partaking of Him in sincerity and truth. This passover offering of Christ was not just symbolic, but it is real and actual in providing deliverance from the shackles of sin. However, only those who feed on Christ live to be released from sin's slavery. All others perish for lack of nourishment.

When we feed on Jesus we have communion with Him. As we partake of Him, we are transformed from death unto life, and we are brought back into harmony with the Father. Thus, this is no ordinary eating of meat and drink. Although we take Christ in as food to our beings, He is not consumed. Such nourishment and communion are the miraculous product of the grace of God made manifest through the Son. He was offered once and for all for the sins of the world, but His saving virtue is continually extended for our sustenance.

Such communion with Christ is the result of love, divine love that gave itself for each and for all. God so loved the world that He gave; the Son so loved that He poured out His life, that condemned sinners might come to the blessed fount and receive life. Therefore it is our response to the light of truth, to the expanse of divine love, to the strength of His holy life, that places us in vital contact with the Saviour. Life is received and fellowship is gained when we accept the flesh and blood remedy of Christ for our dead, sinful condition.

Sin cannot have fellowship with righteousness, nor can iniquity have concord with the holiness of God. Only as we humbly feed on Jesus do we receive the benefits of His nourishment. The nutrient for communion with God is though the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. His cross became our bridge to return unto God. His broken body and shed blood became the meat and drink of atonement, His death canceled the penalty of sin; and His resurrected life became our life-source whereby we might feast and abide in Him. Our union with Christ requires a grateful acceptance of His life, His righteousness, His holiness as the sustaining means of our individual lives.

Jesus entered the scene of our sinful tragedy in the form of human flesh. During His earthly ministry His disciples and followers derived fellowship and strength from Him. They saw miracles, marveled at His teaching, and experienced peaks of worship at the Mount of Transfiguration and the Last Supper. It was following the Passover meal that Jesus likened His body to bread and His blood to

drink. His disciples were thus to remember the Lord's death and to anticipate His return.

Following Christ's crucifixion and death, His post-Resurrection appearances led His disciples up to the occasion of Pentecost. Here they were introduced into spiritual communion with Him. Previous to the baptism with the Holy Spirit the disciples were strong only when Jesus was with them. Now, by continually feeding on the Spirit of Christ, abiding in Him, they found strength to live and preach His gospel. They no longer feared death, for they had found life.

Such spiritual communion with the Lord Jesus is the highest privilege that is afforded us, but it remains a matter of free choice. You and I cannot be compelled to believe on Jesus as Lord and Saviour; neither can we be forcibly reconciled unto God, nor made to partake of His feast of fellowship. Yet no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and there is no other acceptable means of salvation.

Followers of Christ today are confronted with believing on Him, just as His contemporary disciples were. All men must make their choice of diet whether it be for the meat that perisheth or that which endureth unto everlasting life (cf. John 6:27). It is only as we walk in the light as He is in the light that we feed on Jesus, and we continually receive cleansing from all sin.

However, before His death, communion with Christ was primarily a physical fellowship, and it has been epitomized by the Last Supper. Through the centuries Christians have observed this sacrament instituted by the Lord at that hour of hallowed feasting. It has been considered a means of feeding on Christ, and rightly so. Thus, with various emphases, different denominational groups utilize the material aspect of partaking of the Lord's Supper. The broken bread and wine are diversely used as representing communion with Christ, as a means to actual communion, or as the communion itself.

Because of the visible character of this religious sacrament, the concept of communion has frequently been limited to the eating and drinking of the elements the Lord offered following the Passover meal. On the other hand, there is always a mysterious aspect which is attached to the ritual when we partake sincerely, remembering the significance of the bread and wine which Jesus designated. Theological opinions do not matter as much as a heart yearning to commune with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet it seems to us that feeding on Jesus and communion with Him extend beyond the practice of sacramental ritual. Our unity with Christ is accomplished not only by a physical measure, but also, even more completely, by a spiritual partaking of Him. The welfare of every Christian depends upon his personal diet; he must lean heavily on Jesus and on the things that pertain to Him. Moreover, the

transformation of every sinner is brought about only when he sees a need for Christ and hungers and thirsts after Him.

We need Jesus. We need His holy presence in us. This is accomplished only when we feed on Jesus and commune with Him. It is not the mere taking in of physical elements, but it is a communicating of His Spirit with our spirits. Only then are we nourished and built up in Him. As the Father was glorified by the Son, so must we glorify the Son by keeping His feast. He is glorified not only when we feed on Him, but when we give out of His virtue to a needy world about us. This is the manner in which the world needs to see Jesus today; it must see His strength and His salvation in us.

Therefore let us examine more closely what it means to feed on Jesus, and have communion and fellowship together. We should keep a fresh picture in our minds concerning the Lord's Supper and its significance for us. We should hold the truth of His atonement and our redemption close to our hearts. Further, let us reckon that we feed our spirits as well as our bodies. Let us thus consider how and why we should feed on Jesus.

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02 -- THE LORD'S SUPPER

In thinking of the nourishment of Christ and the various aspects of Christian communion, we are primarily drawn to the unique and dramatic occasion of the Last Supper. It was unique in that never before had a meal been so meaningful. It was dramatic in the sense that hovering circumstances impregnated this event with intense experience, superseding the commemoration of the Passover.

Never before had the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine become so significant for mankind. Jesus would soon be taken and crucified. He kept this last Passover feast with His disciples. It was thereafter that our Lord symbolically offered His body and blood as elements for the feast His followers were to keep. This was the earnest of the accomplishment of His offering. Thus, because of the purpose of Jesus Christ, the Last Supper is made His supper, the Lord's Supper.

As Jesus approached the brink of the incomprehensible salvation-sacrifice, He willingly traversed a lonely path of unequalled anguish. It was because of His love for sinful men. Meanwhile, the disciples met with unexpected tragedy, and they fearfully forsook the Master they loved. They had not understood the warnings of Jesus, nor had they grasped His promises. They were swept along in an unrehearsed drama of life and death, with decisions and choices in the making.

How fitting it was that the Lord should institute himself as the Feast of salvation at this time of Passover! The ancient rite of the Passover was the annual commemoration of the typical redemption of the Hebrew people. It marked the

actual deliverance of the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt (cf. Exodus 12). It was also the appointed annual ratification of the covenant between God and His people. Thus the Passover was itself a sacrifice, of both expiation and thanksgiving, and it summed up all other covenant sacrifices.

As such, the rite of the Passover kept the people in remembrance of their dependence on God for individual and community life. This was accomplished by their careful obedience to God's will and way. It was further demonstrated as an external, perennial reminder of the necessity of sacrifice and feasting in recognition of the sovereignty of God.

However, the supper and feast that our Lord ordained exceeds the practice of the paschal feast. While the Passover celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites and the observance of their typical salvation, the Lord's Supper sets forth the actual and complete provision for human redemption by the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God. This marks the transition from dependence upon the keeping of meal and animal offerings and sacrifices for "at-one-ment" with God to the acceptance of the elements of the Lord Jesus Christ as the final Sacrifice for sin and the Source of our life.

No animal-lamb, innocent and free of sin though it was, could provide the real and actual remedy for man's awful estrangement from God. Neither could any animal enter the human situation and represent the ideal man. Hence, only the Son of God-Son of Man, "the only begotten of the Father," could take the mediatorial position between holy God and sinful man. So the Lord Jesus became the actual sacrificial Lamb of God, "that taketh away the sin of the world."

That particular night in Egypt the blood of the "passover" lamb was applied to the lintels and doorposts of every Israelite household. This was to save them from the dreadful destruction that plagued their enemies. Then the paschal lamb was to be eaten as food by those that kept this feast. This was a feast for the whole Israelite nation, and all were called to partake. So it was that Jesus, the Lamb, tasted death for all men, that we might have meat unto life.

When our Lord initiated His supper, it pointed to His blood, that was to be shed and applied as the propitiation for the sin of all mankind. According to the words of Jesus, He evidently referred to the solemn covenant transaction in which Moses divided the blood of atonement. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar to denote the propitiation or satisfaction of God. With the remainder, Moses sprinkled all the people to signify divine favor. The book of the covenant was also sprinkled, confirming the ratification of the covenant of which that book was the record. In so sprinkling, Moses said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exod. 24: 8; cf. Heb. 9:19-20).

Jesus connects those words of Moses with the passover of His new covenant, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament,

which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27-28). Thus, in Jesus, the divine means for reconciliation became human flesh and blood. The blessings of this "better" covenant are symbolized by the bread and wine, and all who receive these tokens in faith are pledged salvation through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Thus Jesus gave His disciples hope for the future by bidding farewell to the past. A final homage had been paid to the Passover and the sacrificial ordinances of the old covenant. Now Christ was teaching His followers the symbolic emblems for the new covenant that He represented. As the old covenant had its vivid embodiment of meaning, so also did the new covenant. Although its implications were more spiritual, they were none the less vivid.

So it was that Jesus took one of the unleavened loaves or cakes before Him, gave thanks, broke it, and passed it to the disciples with words almost exactly as they had heard before: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Then taking the cup which had been filled for the last time, He gave thanks again and passed it, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (Matt. 26:26-28; cf. I Cor. 11:24-25).

Henceforth the Lord's Supper was to be a memorial of Him, and a perpetual recognition of faith in the virtue of His atoning death. The shed blood of the Lord Jesus becomes the permanent seal of this new covenant between the subjects of His kingdom and God, His Father. The unmistakable intimation of Christ is that, as the blood of the Passover lamb redeemed the people of God from the angel of wrath, His precious blood would be a ransom for mankind from the peril of everlasting separation from God.

The disciples were aware that the basis for the old covenant was blood. Lev. 17:11 gives this "common knowledge" explanation of the sanctity of the blood: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Because a covenant implied a sacrifice, the disciples soon recognized that the blood of Jesus, as the new covenant, must be their sacrifice. Moreover, His blood, as the new Paschal Lamb, must be sprinkled in figure upon His followers, that destruction might pass over them in the day of judgment. And as the paschal lamb that was eaten, the broken body of Christ became nourishment unto a new life, free from the bonds of sin.

The repetition of the Lord's Supper became both a means and an occasion for holding communion with Christ after His ascension unto the Father. The joint commemoration of Jesus' broken body and His shed blood soon distinguished the assemblies of His followers from the world at large. Because the disciples

recognized the Lord's emblems as meat and drink for their soul, the Last Supper became the Lord's Supper to the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Lord spread this holy table so that His people could come in unity of purpose and faith and derive strength to resist the enemy of their souls. This was the bond of the new brotherhood He had established. The feast was open to all who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives, to all who looked to Him for the food of spiritual life and sustenance. By thus partaking of Him, we also enter into the fellowship of heaven.

Hence, as Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father, the actual ground of such communion was realized. Christ provided the cup of our salvation by emptying himself so that His blood could cover and cleanse our sin. His blood was shed on the Cross for our sin in shame; but as it is applied to our lives, the Blood prevails in victory. Likewise Christ provided the bread, His body nailed to the Cross. It was offered up in complete sacrifice along with the shed Blood. Though this involved death, it becomes the life of our redemption.

Under this atoning sacrifice of Jesus, sinful man is reconciled unto God. This meaning is clearly expressed by the Apostle Paul in Col. 1:20-22:

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him . . . And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."

Now Jesus Christ is the only means for man to have a proper relationship with his God. The patriarchs of old encountered God with faith that such a means would actualize their symbolic efforts. Thus the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples represented not only a memorial of the past dealings of God with His people, not just a commemoration of the event of the Lord's death, but the sacramental institution of the fulfillment of His identification with our death and our identification with His life.

Scripture reveals the intense importance ascribed to this sacrament by successive followers of the gospel of Christ. In I Cor. 10:16-17, the Apostle Paul makes the Lord's Supper the external bond of Christian unity: "For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." This follows the declaration that the cup is "the communion of the blood of Christ," and the bread "the communion of the body of Christ." Furthermore, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul indicates the continual spiritual application in I Cor. 11:26-29, saying:

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 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. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Paul warns that we are not to be insincere and manifest the outward pretense of ceremonial communion when we are in reality rebellious strangers toward God. The sacrament is to be a genuine expression which symbolically testifies of our communication with God through Christ. It is to be a time of remembrance and examination whereby we experience an even deeper relationship to Christ.

Because Jesus ordained the supper as a sacrament commemorating His death, His sacrificial atonement, and His coming again, it remains the sacred privilege and loving duty of all who believe in His Saviorhood to participate in it. We not only violate the command of Christ if we partake of the Communion emblems dishonestly, but we also fall under condemnation when we neglect it. A peculiar means of grace is derived from this ordinance that the Lord established for His people.

However, Christ has never been a dead hero to Christians, but the One who is alive forevermore. The Lord's death is commemorated as something more than just a sacrifice. It is regarded as the victorious Sacrifice for sinful men once for all, and it cannot be repeated. (Cf. Heb. 9:24-26.) Moreover, Christ's sacrifice was the divine commitment of God to accomplish the holy purpose of our redemption. Thus even the physical elements representing this godly act become involved in all of its sacredness.

Each time we partake of the emblems of His ordinance, Jesus repeats to us the pledge of His love, and reminds us of the promises of His covenant. Then He calls upon us to vigorously exercise our faith to effect our union with Him. As we humbly partake of Christ's provision, we seal our acceptance of the new covenant as ratified by His precious blood. Only then do we properly know and discern the Lord's body.

With regard to the sacramental character of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ, they are the divinely appointed seal of the new covenant of redemption. The blood of the paschal lamb served as the seal of the old covenant under the previous dispensation, and pointed the faith of the Israelites to the coming Redeemer. But at the conclusion of the last authorized Passover, the Holy Supper was instituted as a perpetual memorial and abiding seal of the covenanted mercy and grace of God, till Christ shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Thus great importance is attached to the perpetuation of the Lord's Supper because of the fact and the occasion it represents. The external ritual is an aid to the deeper, spiritual communion that we must have with Christ from day to day.

Within the sacrament itself is the spiritual application needed by every participant. Every follower of Christ will repeatedly find blessing every time he incorporates the ceremony into his life as a sacred expression of loving service to our Lord.

This sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one manner in which the Master has chosen to feed His people more richly with the spiritual bread that comes from heaven. (Cf. Exod. 16:15, "It is manna . . . This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.") As the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness out of response to the act of God, so are people today recipients of spiritual nourishment. We too must respond to the acts of God in Christ on our behalf, to redeem us from sin and death.

In partaking of the symbolic elements that signify Christ's act of sacrifice for us, we draw from the strength of this "Suffering Servant." We should be aware of the mental anguish and the physical suffering that marked Calvary as our altar of atonement. Our Lord's offering of himself becomes the meat and drink which sustains spiritual life in us; and whenever our hearts are reminded of Him, we partake of His food afresh and anew.

All too seldom does man grasp the full-orbed meaning of the events that led to Calvary, nor does he often plumb the depths of the Cross. The supper should not only remind us of hallowed fellowship, but ultimately of Gethsemane and the Cross. Perhaps we can never fathom the agony of Gethsemane, for it is the grief of God and Man in one, face to face with the horror of sin. Yet Gethsemane and Calvary stand together for something unique; they are the entrance into life for us.

The Last Supper was the prelude to Christ's accomplishment of our salvation. His pathway was hewn by the blood-sweat of crucial decision in Gethsemane. Its accompaniment was the satanic tune of mockery at His trial, and it was amplified by the pricking crown and the piercing spikes. His pathway was also one of endurance as He was suspended between heaven and earth, becoming the blameless Sacrifice for all our sin. But nothing prevented the victorious effort of our Lord's intercession for us.

Therefore the sacrament which the Lord instituted at His last supper was verified when the provision for our redemption was victoriously supplied. Our remembrance of the Lord's Supper connects us not only to the pledge that Jesus was making to His disciples, but it connects us to the reality of His redemptive work. Our partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper is a means of testifying to our personal acceptance of that redemption. It thereby becomes actual food for our souls.

Hence this ordinance is not to be carelessly observed just because the spiritual extents of Communion are more highly regarded than the sacrament itself. They are supplementary to each other. The sacrament should be considered as the symbolic expression testifying to one's communication with God through Christ.

And it is an open avenue wherein Christians experience an ever-deepening expression of their unity to Christ.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a most peculiar means of grace. It furnishes the believing communicant with the possibility of an experience which may be properly called "mystical." Although modern men seem to be fearful of this term "mystical," it seems to be the only term that can indicate some of the highest Christian experiences. Such experiences are so transcendent that, like the peace of God itself, they pass human understanding.¹

The Apostle Paul expresses the mysterious character of religious experience when he writes of Communion in I Cor. 10:16-17:

"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? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

The union of the participant and Christ is mysteriously linked to the elements of the cup and the bread. Somehow they become not only food to the body, but also food to the soul. One's bond with Christ is strengthened and fellowship with other Christians is engaged because of the common meat and drink of the Lord.

Perhaps there is nothing more mystical in all of Paul's Epistles than this previous passage in I Corinthians. The key to this scripture seems to be the one word *koinonia*, translated "communion" in the English text, That it does not mean a mere "partaking of" is at once indicated by the fact that the apostle expresses such a meaning by another word in the last clause of the passage (*metecho*, signifying "for we all partake of"). Then again, when we study *koinonia*, in its derivation and as it is used in various connections, it seems that the pith of its meaning is in the idea of "active fellowship." By this is meant a fellowship where both parties give as well as take.²

Thus the Lord's Supper may be interpreted in terms of an active, transcendent fellowship in the following manner: The bread and wine of the supper, when used in a thoroughly Christian attitude, become, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, the means of a spiritual realization of the death of Christ. That death not only occupies the communicant's thought; it also dominates his feeling. The atonement event becomes absolutely real to him. It is reproduced in his consciousness. Spiritually, mystically, in overwhelming effect, it is to him as though the crucified Saviour were actually there, in complete grasp of the senses, as broken, bleeding, and dying, providing atonement for his sin. This mystical presence is, according to Curtis, the first aspect of St. Paul's concept of *koinonia*.³

This acute realization of our Lord's death for us, which is under the operation of the Holy Spirit, is a means of an active fellowship with Christ. When the believer

completely yields his person to that transcendent vision of his atoning Redeemer, he enters into communion with Christ himself. Christ receives him, penetrates him, and "assimilates him to Himself." Curtis feels that even the mystical phrase, "He becomes a part of the body of Christ," is not beyond the fullness of Christian experience. This, then, is the second aspect of Paul's concept of koinonia. It is really an intense emphasis in personal consciousness of that actual union with Christ that every truly born-again Christian experiences in his climactic conversion.⁴

Under the operation of the Holy Spirit this "active fellowship" with Christ is the means of a further fellowship -- a transcendent fellowship by the communicant with other Christians who are with him at the Lord's table. This occurs to the exact extent that they are all in active fellowship with Jesus Christ. As one may gather up all sorts and conditions of men into his consciousness, entering into their sorrows and their joys, thus it is possible for a Christian society, all partaking "of the one bread," to become "one body." This is the completion of St. Paul's conception of koinonia, "the communion of the body of Christ." It is for the Church a predictive foretaste of the redeemed race in Christ, as the members of that race will live in glory. Because of the combined vitality of sacramental-spiritual communion with Christ, and because the death of Christ remains absolutely real to those who are in Christ, they will have active fellowship with Him forever. Moreover, they will also have active fellowship with each other forever.⁵ In a similar vein, Andrew Murray says:

"As our communion with Him becomes more intimate and intense, and we let the Holy Spirit reveal Him to us in His heavenly glory, the more we realize how the life in us is the life of One who sits upon the throne of heaven. We feel the power of an endless life working in us. We taste the eternal life. We have the foretaste of the eternal glory."⁶

How necessary it is that we feed on Jesus! There is no substitute for the nourishment that He provides, for it is given unto everlasting life. Through Him we are delivered from the clutches of sin and death; for as we are united to His life, power to overcome ensues. Thus every opportunity to partake should be utilized, in both sacramental and spiritual communion.

However, the body and blood of Jesus would be useless to us except that they provide the atonement for our sin. Christ established the blessed point of contact with God, on our behalf, at Calvary. Therefore sinful men may leave their burdens at the Cross, appropriate the righteous vitality of Christ by faith, and have active fellowship with God.

The atonement made by the Lord Jesus, then, is priceless to us. Perhaps we can better understand the extensive meaning of communion with Christ if we consider more closely the effective virtue of His atonement. Somehow the promise of everlasting life depends upon the sustenance of Christ's meat and the

purification of His drink. Consider, then, the wonder of Christ's atonement as you partake of Him.

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03 -- THE EFFICACY OF ATONEMENT

The motivating element for the atonement of sinful humanity is found in the love of God. This great truth is epitomized in John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . . For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Such love is incomprehensible to selfish humanity. Even believers can hardly take it in.

Other scriptures further indicate that every aspect of the atonement is to be understood as the provision and expression of God's righteous and holy love to remedy the sin problem which separated man from his Creator. Thus Rom. 5:8 states, "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Again, I John 4:9 affirms, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

According to the holy nature of God, Adam was created to be indwelt by Holy Spirit, and presumably God intended to transform Adam's perfect innocence and capacity into holiness by a series of moral choices. However, Adam willfully refused to do this; instead, he started up a contrary relationship with Satan. By submitting to the temptation of the evil one and disobeying the known plan of God, Adam thus became the introducer of the heredity of sin into the human race. This thought is carried in Rom. 5:12-14, 17-18. Sin and salvation are declared thus:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

This scripture indicates that before the fall of Adam there was neither sin nor death, for Adam was created holy in his innocence. Now, after the fall of Adam, both sin and death prevail, and these are regarded as the natural consequence of Adam's sin. Moreover, the apostle further teaches that death as a consequence of sin passed upon all men through the propagation of the race. Therefore the

propagation of the race from Adam was not only in his physical likeness but also in his depraved moral image.

The immediate effect, then, of the sin of Adam was to place him under the wrath of God. This rendered him and all future progeny liable to suffering, disease, and death. Furthermore, it deprived him and his race of primeval holiness, separating mankind from communion with God and the spiritual life which was imparted by God in the beginning. Thus, from this loss, humanity suffered the total moral disorder and depravation of soul, ultimately rendering the entire human race liable to everlasting misery.

Hence, as Oswald Chambers indicates, the entering in of sin meant the departing of the Holy Spirit from the home of man's body, not the departing from him of the Spirit of God as Creator. "Elohim" has reference to God in correspondence with human flesh. When Adam sinned, this correspondence with God ceased until God became manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ.¹ Thus, there is only one right "at-one-ment," and that is by Christ. There is only one perfect unity, and that is when body, soul, and spirit are united to God through the efficacious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such an atonement was not only necessary, but it was provided by the vicarious, sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross. He suffered and died as a sinless Substitute in our place and stead. This is shown by those scriptures which declare that He died for mankind, or that connect His death with the punishment due our offenses. Such a meaning is found in the following passages:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). II Cor. 5:21 states, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Again, Gal. 1:4 declares, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God... Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . ." (Gal. 3:13); "And hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). "Who gave himself a ransom for all ..." (I Tim. 2:6); "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic economy point to Christ as the great Antitype, but such sacrifices were a revelation of the true nature of human sacrifice. As logic suggests, they taught not merely the sacrifice of man himself in a subjective sense, but also that he himself should be the self-sacrificial offerer. Human sacrifices were prohibited, for by the sacrificing of others they would have been only a caricature of the true sacrificial idea. And even if it were possible for man to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, by his guilt before God he is not qualified as a perfect offerer.²

Therefore, from both the subjective and objective viewpoint, no man could atone for his own sins. Furthermore, on these grounds it was impossible for the Old Testament priesthood and kingship to furnish expiatory Salvation for their needy nation. This could be provided only by the "Righteous Servant of Jehovah," whose coming the prophets predicted.

Thus the Messianic thought developed out of the sense of need before God. It was the divine inspiration to a God-fearing people in the midst of threatening idolatrous nations. The Messiah alone could become the Security for Israel, because He was the absolutely "Righteous One." He alone could satisfy the righteousness of God, for only as the Incarnate One could He personally manifest the unity of God and man. Since, then, the religious thought of the nation centered in Him, there was given to Him also the power to call forth and establish a new and holy race. This was not limited just to Israel, but it was extended to all humanity. It was only as the Christ became a "light" unto the gentiles that He became a "glory" to Israel.

The prophets fully developed the Messianic idea, supplementing the concept of His sacrificial sufferings and death to the sacrifices of the law. They perceived in Him a living totality of truth, for as the God-Man, in whom are conjoined Deity and humanity, there is in His consciousness the full spectrum of all truth. Thus the Messiah fulfills the Old Testament types and forms, giving them their complete spiritual content. As the manifestation of personal truth and eternal life, He therefore becomes the goal toward which all men should strive. Jesus himself proclaimed this truth when He declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

However, perhaps the acme of spiritual truth regarding Christ's atonement in the Old Testament is Isaiah's great, inspired prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Let us note some outstanding verses of this passage:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:4-6, 10-11).

Although Isaiah speaks of Christ primarily under the figure of a lamb, there is also an allusion to the scapegoat. The priest laid his hands upon the goat, confessed the sins of the people over it, and sent it away into the wilderness. No language can be clearer indicating that Christ bore the punishment and banishment

due our sins. Therefore His sacrifice was vicarious and expiatory. He was stricken, smitten, wounded, bruised, and chastised; such language can only indicate that His sufferings were penal afflictions for our sins. Since we are justified and healed by His stripes, His death must in the truest and deepest sense be regarded as propitiatory.

Thus the conception of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice as found in the New Testament is the completion of that foreshadowed in the Old Testament. For this reason Christ is described as having died according to the prediction of the Scriptures. Jesus himself represents His death as a ransom for mankind. He laid down His life voluntarily, for no man had the power to take it from Him. Our Lord never presented His death as that of a martyr. He said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). It was the great salvation purpose in the mind of God that demanded Jesus' life, and He freely gave so that we might freely receive.

Hence we must regard the Crucifixion as the ultimate end for which Jesus came into the world, and not just as an awful occurrence brought about by impetuous circumstances. Calvary is where the redemptive purpose of God collided with the destructive power of sin and Satan, and it is where our Lord broke the bands that held mankind fast to its doom. Therefore Jesus Christ was not merely a martyr to truth, for His death was sacrificial and propitiatory.

In Rom. 3:24-26, the Apostle Paul clearly sets forth the expiatory death of Jesus, writing:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Cf. Rom. 3:21 ft.)

Christ is here regarded as a propitiatory Sacrifice which is accepted of God for all humanity. It is accomplished in such a manner that He remains just, and yet can be the Justifier of every sinner who puts his faith in the efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus. Dr. Wiley states that the word which is used for "propitiation" in the preceding passage is hilasterion, a Greek word which was employed by the Septuagint to signify the lid of the ark, or the mercy seat.³ As this was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:14), so the mercy seat of the gospel is the Cross, where the sinless blood of Christ was shed. This was the literal fulfillment of the previous token that the righteous sentence of the law had been actually absorbed by our Lord. He endured the curse of our sin so that what would otherwise be a judgment seat could righteously be a mercy seat.

Heb. 9:11-15 also points to the efficacious blood of Christ in His propitiatory work, saying:

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Thus Christ, in fulfillment of the Old Testament type, is himself the hilasmos, that which propitiates, and the hilasterion, the place of propitiation, sprinkling the mercy seat with His own blood. By so supplying a perfect, sinless Offering, He so honored the law by enduring its righteous sentence that God, who ever foresaw the Cross, is vindicated in "passing over" the sins of mankind from Adam to Moses (cf. Rom. 5:13) and the sins of believers under the old covenant (cf. Exod. 29:33), and just in justifying sinners under the new covenant. Hence Jesus Christ, as mankind's Substitute, endures the punishment which would otherwise befall the guilty themselves. From this aspect, the blood of a sinless Christ becomes an expiation or a covering which protects from the wrath and banishment of God those who believe in Christ.

Although Christ's sacrifice was voluntary, and is held as a constraining motive for the loving self-surrender of men to God, we should also remember the priestly work of our Lord. His offering was nothing less than a real, objective sacrifice to God for us. However there is no vicarious substitution in the sense of discharging all its beneficiaries from a personal obligation to righteousness. The death of Jesus Christ is never represented as merely a means of propitiation, but also as an actual propitiatory sacrifice. Thus He appears for us as the Second Adam, Representative and Head of the new creation.

According to the Scriptures, the sinlessness of Christ did not merely give Him a unique position in the human race. Rather, they teach that Jesus takes the place of sinful man as a whole, and His sacrifice was the equivalent for all humanity who had come under the penalty of death because of sin. Therefore Christ's death has universal significance, and by virtue of His divine nature His sinless humanity reaches every facet of man's life. Moreover, the death of Christ is not just an external and constraining power as moral influence, but it is a propitiatory offering which avails for the remission of sins.

Scripturally, there are three senses in which the term hilasmos is used in the New Testament with regard to propitiation. (1) Jesus is the hilasmos, being the Propitiator and the Virtue of that propitiation. "He is the propitiation for our sins:

and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2); "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). (2) Christ is also the hilasterion or Mercy Seat, as the word is used in the Septuagint. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). (3) Where the adjective is used, the term thuma is understood as in Heb. 2:17, where the high priest is said to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Here the term is hilasterion, and the correct meaning is "to make propitiation for the sins of the people."⁴

Furthermore, in the Old Testament, Exod. 25:21-22, it is interesting to note that the mercy seat was regarded as a place of communion. This passage states:

"And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

It is likewise significant that the Cross, the mercy seat of Christ, where He shed His innocent blood for our sin in atonement, becomes the place of our communion with God. The cross of Christ is man's point of vital contact with God; it is the only means one may use to approach the throne of grace. Thus it is said that the vicarious death of Jesus is the "procuring cause" of our salvation, for it is the basis of our justification before God. As the prophet Isaiah says, (64:6), "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags . . ." Hence the sinner is estranged from God, but is brought back into communion with God by the propitiation of our Lord, being reconciled by His sinless death in our stead.

Another aspect of the efficacious atonement made by Jesus Christ is the thought of reconciliation. According to Wiley, reconciliation is from the verbs *katallasso* and *apokatallasso*, both of which are translated from the Greek to mean "to reconcile." Basically they denote a change from one state to another, but scripturally they imply a change from a state of enmity to one of friendship.⁵ The apostle uses this term quite freely. Thus we read:

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" [or reconciliation] (Rom. 5:10-11).

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19).

"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:16).

"And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight" (Col. 1:20-22).

It is clearly evident that the reconciliation between God and mankind is effected by Jesus Christ our Lord. However, reconciliation means more than just laying aside our enmity to God. The relation is also a judicial one, and it is this judicial variance of righteousness between God and man that is considered in the idea of reconciliation. Moreover, as II Cor. 5:19 states, this reconciliation is effected, not by just laying aside our enmity in assuming self-righteousness, but by the non imputation of our trespasses to us in appealing to the saving power of the blood of Christ.

Again, in II Cor. 5:19, "the word of reconciliation," concerning the sacrificial death of the Son of God to reconcile the world unto himself, is the body of truth which is to be proclaimed to the guilty, and by which they are entreated to be reconciled to God. Though the sinner is under the bondage of Satan and the curse of sin, through the redemptive price of the blood of Christ on Calvary he may be delivered from bondage and released from the power of evil. Thus, with regard to the atoning sufferings of Jesus, they are to be viewed as a propitiation, a reconciliation, and a redemption.

The aspect of redemption comes from the word which means literally "to buy back." The Greek terms lutroo and apolutrosis, meaning "to redeem" and "redemption" respectively, were used by the ancient Greeks and also by the New Testament writers to signify the act of setting a captive free by the payment of a lutron or redemptive price. Therefore the terms came to be used in the broader sense of a deliverance from every kind of evil, through a price paid by another.⁶

This is the true scriptural meaning, and it is shown in the following references:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20).

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold.., but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:18-19).

"For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

Hence the death of Christ is the redemptive price. He gave "his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28); and "he gave himself a ransom for all" (I Tim. 2:6). Here the idea of substitution is clearly evident. One thing is paid for another -- the "blood of Christ" for the redemption of the captives of sin, who are condemned men.

The efficacious atonement of Jesus Christ may thus be defined as the satisfaction offered to God by His vicarious death at Calvary for the original and actual sins of all mankind. Through the sinless blood He shed, all true penitents who believe on Him are personally reconciled to God, are pardoned from the penalty of their sins, and entitled to everlasting life. II Cor. 5:21 states, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The power of the atonement, then, depended upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becoming identified with sin, entering our human predicament.

The revelation is not that Christ was punished for our sins, but as the previous verse states, He was made "to be sin for us." He who had no sin, no connection in himself with the body of sin, became identified with sin. He became identified not only with the disposition of sin, but with the very body of sin. Jesus Christ went straight through identification with sin so that all humanity might be released from the penalty of sin through His atonement. He endured the separation from God, went through the deepest depths of death and hell, and came out triumphant. He thereby established a new people -- a people reconciled unto God. Consequently, anyone who chooses to be identified with Christ will be freed from the disposition of sin, released from his connection with the body of sin, and will come out "more than conqueror" because of what Jesus Christ has done.⁷

To the penitent believer, then, the efficacy of the atonement means that the vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice of Christ was complete, sufficient, and potent as a remedy for the sins of the entire human race. It means that without the sinless offering of Jesus Christ the sinful lives of men would be exposed to the wrathful destruction of a holy God. It means that in Christ the penitent believer finds a new source of life; a refuge in love, mercy, and grace. Only in Christ is the moral justice of God satisfied.

Moreover, the efficacy of the atonement means that the sacrificial blood of Christ alone can provide the bridge and the substance of the bridge whereby a sinner can be brought back to God in hallowed fellowship. Moral depravity need not separate man from God any longer. Also it means that the redemptive price of man's salvation is found only in the sinless blood of Christ. Whereas the sinner is bound by habits of sin and a nature of iniquity, controlled by Satan, he is delivered, set free, redeemed through the blood of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

The purpose of God revealing himself through the incarnation of Jesus, and by means of His atonement, was that man might realize the demands of God and gain readjustment to Him. In other words, the whole purpose of God through the incarnation of Christ, His suffering, and death, is the redemption of man. The great price of atonement was paid to overcome the disaster of the Fall and to produce a being more noble than the original Adam. In this manner a new race, a holy people, is established. It is a race of sinners transformed into a holy creation through the power of the Blood.

However, the atonement is but the basis of redemption; it is redemption realized in the plan of God. The inclusive thought of redemption expands to include the Incarnation on the one hand, and the resurrection of Jesus bringing mankind everlasting life on the other. Therefore let us next consider the fuller meaning of redemption.

* * * * *

04 -- THE MEANING OF REDEMPTION

The revelation of redemption means that Jesus Christ came down to earth in order that by means of His death on the Cross He might put the whole human race on a redemptive basis. Thereby He made it possible for every man to get back into communion with God. What the redemption deals with is the sin of the whole human race; not primarily with the sins of individuals, but fundamentally with the heredity of sin. Through the redemption we gain deliverance from the disposition of sin which is within us, and severance from the body of sin to which we are connected by our "old man." That is, we may be completely delivered from sin both in disposition and in domination. But unless the universality of sin is recognized, we can never understand even the need of redemption? Thus the Apostle Paul states:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:12, 17).

The scriptural witness is that God has redeemed the world from the possibility of condemnation because of the heredity of sin, For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them . . ." (II Cor. 5:19). God does not hold a man responsible for having inherited the disposition of sin any more than he is held for being born. But God does hold a person responsible for not allowing Jesus Christ to deliver him from this evil disposition when he realizes that is what Christ came to do. A man is certainly condemned when he sees the light of truth, and prefers the darkness of deceit (cf. John 3:19).

Only when we look upon Jesus Christ as the "Word made flesh," as God manifested in the form of man, as the ransom price whereby the entire human race may return unto God, is the meaning of our redemption discerned. As we have indicated, God's primary purpose in redemption was to obtain a race of holy persons. In other words, His purpose was the same in redemption that it had been in creation. His plan carried out at creation was hindered because of the entrance of sin, but in redemption every obstacle is swept away; sin is conquered.

From the old Adamic race, broken in organism, and doomed to destruction because of sin, the new Adam, Jesus Christ, is to secure a new race completely personal, organic, and holy. This is not to disregard the importance of the individual person, but our outcome must be a racial redemption. As important as the atonement is, it becomes a means to a large racial result, and is treated as only one necessary feature of the complete redemptive work of our Lord.

The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ was an abnormal event due to the sin of man, and it was the preliminary act in preparation for the atonement by the death of Christ. However, the Incarnation was more than a preparation for the atonement; it was also the provision of a dynamic center for the new race. Men are made absolutely complete as an organism only through each other, and in "active fellowship" with Christ. The finishing, quickening help comes only from the racial Head, and that Head is our Lord.²

Furthermore, the life of Christ cannot be fully understood from the standpoint of the single fact of His atoning death. To this must be added the more complete fact that He is, in all and through all, preparing himself by suffering to be the everlasting race Example. Thus He is the everlasting Source of life, and the everlasting moral influence. By means of His humiliation, our Lord obtains exhaustive human experience which perfects His qualifications as the Head of the new race. After His resurrection, He not only has the power of God, but the sympathetic comprehension of the need of every man. This could come to Him only by suffering for men, with men, and as God become man.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, in

bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2: 9-10).

Thus, as the Incarnation is the basis of Christ's mediatorial position between holy God and sinful man, we must further indicate its relation to the redemptive work of Jesus. In the previous passage it was intimated that the primary purpose of our Lord's assumption of flesh and blood was to provide atonement by sacrificial death. By this death Jesus effected the abolishment of death itself, the reconciliation of offenders, and the propitiation necessary for both. This, scripture states, Christ accomplished by "taking hold on" or "rescuing" the "seed of Abraham," thereby becoming a "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (cf. Heb. 2:16,17).

William Pope says the previous passage with its entire context (Heb. 2:10-18) impressively demonstrates that the Incarnation was the way to the Cross. The way of the Cross was to abolish death by taking its power from Satan, death's representative and lord. Again, this required that Jesus should take our flesh in order that He might taste death for every man. He thus delivers mankind, who have been subject to bondage throughout time by fear of death. Only as man could He be a "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" to make expiation for the sins of the people, In order to accomplish these results -- the destruction of death, the reconciliation of the offenders subject to death, and the propitiation required by both -- He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. He taketh to himself humanity, bringing blessing to faithful Abraham and his seed.³

But as Wiley indicates, the "seed of Abraham" refers also to a more remote purpose of the Incarnation. Though the atonement is perfected in Christ, it needs to be applied by the Spirit. Moreover, by taking to himself the "seed of Abraham," it is implied that Jesus assumed human nature in its capacity for development, or continuity as a race. Therefore Jesus Christ was the true Representative of the human race, and consequently is himself referred to as "the seed of Abraham," to whom the promises were made. (Cf. Gal. 3:16.) Hence "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13-14).⁴

Furthermore, Paul expresses this purpose with an ethical emphasis when he declares that He "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Christ then is the "seed" or vital Ancestor from which shall come a redeemed and holy people, characterized by Peter as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:9). However, this remote purpose is to be succeeded by a final or ultimate purpose. In Eph. 1:9-10, we read:

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

Hence we see that as the Incarnation is related to the atonement of Christ, so they are related to the Spirit's administration of redemption, even to the consummation of all things. Apparently the redemption is not only for mankind; it is for the entire universe. It is for everything that sin and Satan have marred. There is a day coming when the complete redemption of Christ, by virtue of His incarnation and atonement, will be actually manifested. Then there will be "a new heaven and a new earth," with a new, redeemed humanity upon it.

Doctrinally, the natural transition from the incarnation of Jesus Christ to that of His finished redemptive act is known as His atonement. Although we have already considered the sufficiency of the atonement in providing redemption for mankind, we have yet to consider the stages included within the atonement, and their association with the meaning of redemption. Partial connection has been made with the Incarnation, but we should be fully aware that the atonement was accomplished only after our Lord passed through two successive states -- humiliation and exaltation. Redemption would be meaningless without the aspects of humiliation and exaltation.

The outstanding passage of scripture which provides the expositional base for thought concerning the humiliation of Christ is Phil. 2:5-8, which states:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Orton Wiley suggests that a clearer rendering of Phil. 2:6-8 is as follows:

"Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, the death of the cross."⁵

This text clearly reveals the successive stages of Christ's humiliation as descension from His divine estate to a human estate, and from the dignity of created manhood to the ignominy of the Cross. Furthermore, this passage demonstrates that because Christ did not consider equality of God the Father something to retain in the face of lost humanity, He emptied himself of divine reputation, and became the "Suffering Servant" of God and man. (Cf: Isaiah 53.) Thus Jesus, subsisting in the likeness of man, endured a continuous humiliation by

self-renunciation and obedient subordination. He perfected His humiliation by becoming the Representative of sinners, accepting the sacrificial death of the Cross as the only means of their redemption.

Andrew Murray points out that this perfect humility of Christ is the secret of our redemption. It is pride that made redemption needful; it is from pride that man needs above everything to be redeemed. Pride has its root and strength in a terrible spiritual power, outside of us as well as within us. Although it identifies itself as our very own, its satanic origin should not be mistaken. Even as we need to look to the first Adam and his fall to know the power of sin within us, we also should behold the "Second Adam" and His power to give us a life of humility as real and abiding and masterful as that of sinful pride. Thus we have our life from and in Christ even more truly than from and in Adam. The life of God which entered human nature in the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the root in which we are to stand and grow, forming a new race, holy unto God.⁶

Humility is the chief characteristic of Christ, the root and essence of all His character as our Redeemer. The Incarnation is His heavenly humility, His emptying himself and becoming man. The life of Jesus was humble and lowly in every respect, taking the "form of a servant," His act of atonement is humility, for "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." His resurrection, His ascension, and His glory likewise reflect humility; it is humility exalted to the throne and crowned with glory. "He humbled himself . . . Wherefore God... highly exalted him" (cf. Phil. 2:8-11).

Thus in heaven, where Christ was with the Father, in His birth, in His life, in His death, and in His sitting on the throne, humility permeates every situation. Jesus Christ is the Humility of God embodied in human nature. He is the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in meekness and in gentleness, to seek and serve and save us. As the love and condescension of God make Him the Benefactor and Helper and Servant of all, Jesus was the "Incarnate Humility." Moreover as our Redeemer in the midst of the throne, He continues to be the meek and lowly Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

However, in considering the exaltation of Christ because of His humility, it may be said that when Jesus cried from the Cross "It is finished," His exaltation began. Death became conquered, and it had no power over Him (cf. Rom. 6:8-9). Thus, when Jesus entered into the realm of the dead, it was as a Conqueror. According to Eph. 4:8-9, He descended into the lower parts of the earth, "led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Also, I Pet. 3:18-19 indicates that Jesus, "quickened by the Spirit," preached to the spirits in prison, and that in this interval the Redeemer asserted His authority and lordship in the region where the congregation of the dead is the great aggregate of mankind. Moreover, as Acts 13:37 points out, the body of Jesus was preserved inviolate, and "saw no corruption." Thus, as the Son of God took upon Him flesh and blood and entered

into the state of human life through the Incarnation, so in the descensus He triumphantly entered the hitherto unknown state of the dead.⁷

The next stage in the exaltation of Christ is His resurrection, the act by which He came forth alive from the tomb. Jesus appeared alive to His disciples in tangible flesh and bone, so they recognized His body as the temple of life in which He had been crucified. In addition to recognizing the visible appearance of their Lord, the disciples also realized that He had acquired complete powers which transcended those manifested during His previous earthly ministry.

The appearances of the Lord Jesus following His resurrection were generally recorded over a forty-day period: to Mary, in the garden of the tomb (John 20: 15-16); to Peter alone (Luke 24: 34); to the two on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:13 ff.); to ten disciples in the absence of Thomas (John 20:19); to the eleven together (John 20:24-29); to the disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1 ft.); to above five hundred followers at once (I Cor. 15:6); to James alone (I Cor. 15:7); at His ascension (Luke 24:50-51). Finally, Paul declares Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road (I Cor. 15:8).

However, the total significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not to be limited to the self-verification of Jesus, or the evidential power involved. The Lord's resurrection is the consummation of the atoning sacrifice, providing the ground for our justification, and forming the basis of a new spiritual fellowship between God and man. Thereby the resurrection of Christ is ultimately the guaranty of man's own personal resurrection.

In His incarnation, our Lord assumed flesh and blood so that He might taste death for every man. In His atonement, Jesus shed His own blood and died that our sins might be blotted out, and that our sin might be cleansed. Then, in His resurrection, the Lord Jesus achieved victory over death, the curse of sin, for every man. Such a victory could be accomplished, even though He became sin for us and suffered its guilt and curse, because Christ remained sinless in character, blameless before the Father.

Thus, by taking our nature and dying in it, then quickening it, the resurrected Christ becomes the Representative of a new and glorified humanity. As such, He founds an eternal priesthood as our Redeemer and Mediator. Because a new race is thereby established, Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5 call the Resurrection a birth, referring to the Lord as the "firstborn from the dead." Hence He is given pre-eminence: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21-22).

Moreover, because of the sinless character of the offering of Jesus, and the efficiency of the Offerer, His resurrection also furnishes the ground for our justification. Rom. 4:25 points out that Christ "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Hence Christ's victory over death established a

new and "unchangeable priesthood," and He becomes the Mediator of a "better covenant" (cf. Heb. 7: 22-24). Furthermore, Heb. 7:25-27 states:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once [once for all], when he offered up himself."

Thus Jesus died for the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, and He arose to become the Executor of the new covenant by the which we "are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (cf. Heb. 10:9-10). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus therefore furnishes a unique, vital principle -- a power for righteousness, which is the abiding source of justifying and sanctifying grace. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us" (Heb. 10:14-15).

As the resurrection of Christ provides power for righteousness, and is the abiding source of justifying and sanctifying grace, the glorified humanity of our Lord forms the basis of our redeemed relationship of communion with God. Jesus was "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:15, 18-19).

This new humanity in Christ, which made Him "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), provides the unifying bond between Him and those who believe on Him, and who are adopted as children "by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5). Our new humanity in Christ is ethical as well as spiritual (cf. Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10). As the basis of a new and holy fellowship, it also means our forsaking the separation of sin, becoming a part of the Church, the body of Christ.

As we have already pointed out, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the guaranty of our future resurrection. It is a vital part of the redemptive purpose of God in Christ that man should be released from the consequences of sin physically as well as be delivered from sin spiritually. Eternal life is the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of Jesus: "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47); that is, we have the life that He manifested in His human body overcoming death. Christ affirms, "Ye have not [that] life in yourselves" (John 6:53, R.V.). In other words, His life is not ours by natural birth; it can be given to us only by means of His cross. The cross of Christ is the gateway into His life, and His resurrection means that He has power to convey that life to us (cf. John 17:2).

Beyond the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension is a further stage in His exaltation. This event marks the close of His life on earth. By the Lord's ascension He becomes the Possessor of all power in heaven and in earth (cf. Matt. 28:18). However, as Wiley cautions, Christ's removal from earth to heaven must not be understood as a mere transference of His presence from one portion of the physical universe to; another. Rather, it is a local withdrawal into what is known as the "presence of God."⁸

Hence, the Ascension was the passing of Christ into a new sphere of mediatorial action. It was Christ taking possession of the "presence of God" for us, and it is immediately associated with His high priestly intercession. Our Lord thus enters into the holy place to "appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). Here Christ offers His living manhood, perfected through sufferings (cf. Heb. 5:6-10), "as the propitiation for our sins: and not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Because of the complete and holy consecration of Jesus, He provides a living way for us through the veil of separation from God. That is, His crucified, resurrected, and glorified body becomes the way of access through which His people have liberty "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (cf. Heb. 10:19-20). Ultimately, the Ascension signifies the withdrawal of Christ in the flesh in order to establish the conditions under which the Holy Spirit could be received as a communicating Gift to the Church. Jesus said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16: 7). Therefore at His ascension our Lord enters heaven and holds the way open for humanity.

Thus it is evident that our Lord's purpose in becoming "Deity Incarnate" was to redeem mankind. By His death on the Cross, Jesus made the way for every son of Adam to get back into communion with God. His cross, then, is the door for our lost, dying race to enter into the life of God. At the ascension of Christ our redemption is completely provided, and any man may approach the throne of God because of what our Saviour has done. He is now at the right hand of the Father, not only as the Son of God (cf. John 1:18), but also as the Son of Man.

Because of the marvelous grace of the Lord Jesus, through His blood we can become so identified with Him until we know that our connection with the body of sin is severed, receiving the "righteousness of God in him." Redemption, then, means that we are readjusted to God. It means that we are free to fulfill all of His commands. It means that we are ultimately saved to have communion with Him forever. Only when we are redeemed can we have communion with God through Christ.

Our Lord proclaims himself to be the Substance of the new life of our redemption from sin and death. He specifically describes himself to be the only

Meat and Drink by which the world may truly live. Let us note the vital content of Jesus' words, recorded in John 6:51, 53-57, 63:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

It is plain that Christ speaks of himself as the Bread which feeds and nourishes the soul, and preserves the believer from the consequences of death. Men ate of manna from heaven in the wilderness, but they died. However, whosoever eats of this Living Bread shall never die. The Lord indicates that this is His flesh, His life, which He was about to give up to save the life of the world. He points to His atoning death as that which alone can give life to the world. Thus His death was to be a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for the sin of the world.

Because no human life is preserved unless there is bread, or proper nourishment received, so no soul can be saved but by the merit of Christ's death. All the precious benefits of redemption: pardon of sin, acceptance with God, adoption as sons, access to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life, are all properly the flesh and blood of Christ. They were purchased by the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood, and the blessings of redemption are denominated from the price that was paid for them. They are valued as the surrendered life and shed blood of our Lord.

Hence the privileges of the gospel are as flesh and blood to us, prepared by the offering of Christ for the nourishment of our souls. Notice that the Lord Jesus first compares himself to bread, which is necessary food; then to flesh, which is accounted as tasty and delicious. Partaking of Christ is indeed a "feast of fat things" (Isa. 25:6). The soul is satisfied with Christ as "with marrow and fatness" (Ps. 63:5). In Jesus Christ and His gospel there are real supply and solid satisfaction. He alone is "meat indeed" and "drink indeed," for He alone satiates and replenishes.

The meaning of eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood is nothing more or less than believing in Him. Jesus explained that His words in this regard were spiritual and living and not fleshly and material. Our Lord states that, as He lived by the Father, so he that ate His flesh lived by Him. Consequently the sense in which the believer partakes and lives upon Christ is similar to that existing between Christ

and the Father, and in that "eating" there cannot possibly be any material food involved.

As we partake of meat and drink by eating and drinking, so we partake of Christ and His redemption by faith; for believing in Christ includes the elements that are involved in eating and drinking. First, it implies an appetite for Christ. This spiritual eating and drinking begins with "hungering and thirsting" (Matt. 5:6). It requires an earnest and importunate desire after Christ that seeks the fullness of His salvation with an urgency that says, "Give me Christ or else I die." Such an attitude not only seeks life, but it seeks the proper source of life and strength.

Also we must apply the provision of the Lord Jesus to our own personal need. Food looked upon will not feed us; but when it is eaten and made our own, so that it becomes a part of us, then it nourishes us and extends life. The same is true as we feed on Jesus. We must accept Him and His redemption benefits so as to appropriate His nurture to ourselves. This inclination receives all that Christ is and means with the words, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Again, there is a delight in Christ and His salvation just as material food is savored and enjoyed. The doctrine of Christ crucified must be meat and drink to us to relish and digest with joy. We are to feast upon the redemptive blessings of the New Testament in the precious blood of Christ as we do the bountiful supplies that nature provides for our physical bodies. Strength and grace unfolds in our souls as we linger before the table of the Lord.

We derive nourishment from Christ as we depend upon Him for the support and comfort of our spiritual life. To feed upon Jesus is to do all in His name, in union with Him, and by virtue drawn from Him. It is to live upon the Lord as we do physically upon our meat and drink. Just how our bodies are nourished by our food is difficult for us to describe, but nevertheless we are aware of the fact. The same is true with the spiritual nourishment we receive from Christ; the "how" is hard to comprehend. Thus our Lord chose the familiar acts of eating and drinking and made them sacramental signs by which the benefits of His redemptive death could be more fully understood by His followers.

Christ's death, therefore, becomes the believer's life. He who knew no sin put away by death the sin that death brought in; and as the Sin Offering, Jesus becomes the Meal Offering upon which the believer feeds. Sin, the only disturbing factor between the soul and God, is infinitely and eternally removed, and a feast is provided. It is a feast that sustains, as the Meal Offering, the life received through the Sin Offering. However it is impossible to know and enjoy Christ as the Bread of Life in the Meal Offering until He is believed upon as the atoning Saviour in the Sin Offering, the One who gave His priceless life in expiation of our sin.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the first living principle of grace, and without it we have neither the truth of spiritual life nor any title to eternal life. Our bodies live

better without meat than our souls do without Christ. It is a certain sign that we have no spiritual life in us if we have no desire towards Christ, or any delight in Him. If the soul does not hunger and thirst, it does not live. For it is certain that we cannot have spiritual life unless we derive it from Christ by faith.

By faith we have a close and intimate union with Christ; He is in us, and we in Him (cf. John 17:21-23). We are one with the Lord as our bodies are with our food when it is digested. Thus, whoever eats the flesh of Christ and drinks His blood, who lives by faith in Christ crucified as a continued act, the same dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him. It is an inseparable union like that between the body and digested food (cf. I John 4:13).

Divine life is received by true believers by virtue of their union with the Lord Jesus. Those who eat and drink of Christ partake and share His life. Therefore those who feed on Jesus shall live by Him; those who live upon Christ shall live by Him. Whosoever partakes and shares in the meat and drink of Jesus Christ as food for his soul has eternal life now, so long as he participates in Christ's life by continual feeding on Him. This, then, is the purpose and meaning of redemption, that we might be brought from death unto life by virtue of life-giving food in the offering and accomplishment of Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

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05 -- THE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNION

Communion is the act of partaking and sharing in the life sustenance which the Saviour has so freely provided. It refers to our actual union with Christ by our feeding on Him, as we become totally involved in His life, and He in ours. We have previously considered that the elements used in the Communion ritual are common unleavened bread and unadulterated wine. However, communion with Christ is primarily a spiritual experience initially affecting the deeds of physical life, not a physical experience effecting spiritual life.

Although religious experience is effective on the combined psycho-physical existence of man, the common meeting ground for God and man is basically in the spiritual realm, through Jesus Christ. Some have mistakenly endeavored to encounter God and receive of Christ primarily on the physical level of their existence. They have set up so-called sacred objects, whereby they believe God will induce His life-giving selfhood into such material objects, enabling them to meet Him, as it were, on their own terms.

We do not question that God uses temporal substance to reveal himself, or to convey the symbolic expression of the life-food of His Son. However, we do question the merit of humanly consecrated substance, which supposedly becomes infused with the life of God. This attitude and practice border on idolatry, and it misses the intended meaning of spiritual union in Christ.

Again we say that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are received only in a spiritual manner. The benefits of Christ's atonement are communicated unto the believing and hungering soul by the Holy Spirit. Also this is the only manner in which we can be said to receive of the body and blood of Christ in His supper. Faith is the medium through which we receive the food of our Lord's atonement as the benefits of our redemption.

Thus, considering beyond the symbolic elements of Communion, we discern that the real elements are the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note again the words of Jesus in John 6:51, 53-57, 63, where He declares that He is "the living bread," that this bread is His flesh, and that in order for anyone to have everlasting life he must eat of His flesh and drink His blood. Only as we partake of these elements do we have communion with Christ. But He explains that the words He speaks are spirit. We are to feed on Jesus spiritually, so that we are united to Him actually.

Many have been repulsed by the seeming extreme requirements of communion with Christ by feeding on Him. They seem willing to abide by the external sacrament, but they are opposed to participating in the spiritual life of Christ. They are proud to display the sacramental badge of Communion ritual, but they are not united with Christ in spirit, and they "starve" to death.

Communion with Christ does not primarily take place when we partake of such symbolic elements as the bread and wine; nor are they necessarily proof of spiritual communion. These constituents are an assistance to spiritual communion, but we are assured of unfeigned communion with Christ only when we partake of the elements that the bread and wine represent: the death, the broken body, and the shed blood of Christ. Consider that Jesus spoke of our participation of His body and blood in the spiritual sense: "The flesh profiteth nothing." A deeper scrutiny, then, is necessary to survey the total meaning of the constituents of actual communion.

A. The Broken Body

The flesh of Christ was treated shamefully. He was spat upon; He was struck by angry fists. His back was laid open by cruel scourgings; His brow was torn by the thorny crown rudely pressed thereon. His hands and feet were painfully pierced by spikes, nailing Him to the Cross. But not a bone of Jesus' fleshly body was broken, nor was His body left for the birds of prey to rend and tear apart. However, the questions may arise: Is this the "broken body" meant for our communion, our fellowship? Must I experience the same misuse of my flesh in order to be a partaker of His sufferings? Let us examine this element more closely.

In an equally literal sense, the body of Christ was broken in its ultimate existence. That is, the sentiments of Jesus concerning himself were broken and

cast aside in preference to providing the Father's salvation for lost mankind. Hence, despising the shame, enduring the Cross (cf. Heb. 12:2), Jesus humbled himself to exalt the Father. (Yet He was in turn exalted in His humiliation.) Thus the broken body of Christ may best be discerned by considering the manner in which our Lord sacramentally humbled himself. In Jesus we see how as the Son of God in heaven, and as the Son of Man on earth, He took the place of entire subordination, as did no other man, and gave God the honor and the glory which are due Him.

Such perfect breaking up of self, of selfish plans, attitudes, and actions portrays a clear insight into the total meaning of "the broken body" of Christ. All selfish glorification, all self-sufficiency was broken before utter dependence upon God the Father. Note the manner of words in which our Lord speaks of His relation to the Father, and see how consistently He uses the terms "not" and "nothing" concerning himself. Consider the following examples:

"The Son can do nothing of himself (John 5:19). I can of mine own self do nothing . . . my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will" (John 5:30). "I came not to do mine own will" (John 6:38). "My doctrine is not mine" (John 7:16). "I do nothing of myself" (John 8:28). "I seek not mine own glory" (John 8:50). "The word which ye hear is not mine" (John 14:24).

Andrew Murray declares that such words enable us to behold the deepest roots of Christ's life and work. They reveal how it was that God was able to provide His mighty redemption through Jesus. Also they indicate that absolute submission and dependence upon the Father's will was what became Jesus as the Son. Moreover, such words teach us concerning the essential nature and life of that redemption which the Lord accomplished and now communicates. It is that Christ literally reckoned himself nothing that God might be all. He resigned himself entirely, His will and His powers, so the Father might work in and through Him. Of His marvelous works and teaching, of His own power and will, of His own glory, and of His whole mission, Jesus said: It is not I; I am nothing; I have given myself completely to the work of the Father through Me; I am nothing, the Father is all.¹

Jesus Christ represented the whole human race rightly related to God when He was baptized. It was there that He took the responsibility upon himself for the sins of the whole world. The reason Christ had himself baptized after the manner of John's baptism was to signify the redemption He would bring at our repentance of sin.² Hence it was at this baptism that the Holy Ghost descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Yet the way of Christ pleasing God was also the path of brokenness. It was only because the Lord would allow His body to be broken that the angel could proclaim that He should be called "Jesus," for "he shall save his people from their sins." Thus Gethsemane and Calvary stand for something unique. They stand for the culmination of His humiliation, and they mark the broken character of our Lord's

body. It becomes a part of His ultimate destiny in providing the gateway into life for us.

In Matt. 16:21, the words of Christ emphatically state that He came on purpose for the Cross, and apparently there was no fear in His mind about it. However, Oswald Chambers suggests that the fear of Jesus in Gethsemane was that He might not get through the ordeal as the Son of Man. Satan's onslaught was that, although He would undeniably get through as the Son of God, it would be only as an isolated Figure.³ Unless Jesus also got through as Representative of sinful man, He could not achieve Saviourhood.

There could be only one Saviour, the Lord Jesus. The only possibility of God being satisfied with mankind was for Christ to make it possible for man to live as He lived. A way was made when Jesus became sin for us. When He took our place and stead, contrary to the sentiments of His holy nature, our Lord was utterly broken for us. It was especially along this line that Satan tempted Jesus. Although he could not touch Jesus as the Son of God, taunts were hurled at Christ as the Son of Man, tempting His humanity concerning the folly of becoming sin for mankind. Chambers very aptly describes the probable deceitful address of Satan to Jesus:

"You will get through as Son of God, I cannot touch you there, but You will never get one member of the human race through with You. Look at Your disciples, they are asleep, they cannot even watch with You. When You come to the Cross Your body will be so tortured and fatigued, so paralyzed with pain, and Your soul will be so darkened and confused, that You will not be able to retain a clear understanding of what You are doing. Your whole personality will be so clouded and crushed by the weight of sin that You will never get through as Man."⁴

In spite of the temptation of Satan for Jesus to spare himself from the notorious burden of the sin of the world, the Son remained submissive to the will of the Father. Because Christ kept His mind fixed upon the will of God, He found it possible to even humble himself before sinful men, becoming the Servant of all. Thus the humility of Jesus, His broken body of self, was simply His complete surrender to do the will of the Father. He willingly allowed the Father to do in Him what He pleased, remaining unwavering before the opinions of sinful men, no matter what they might say of Him or do to Him.

Hence all of Christ's sentiments of self were broken to accomplish the salvation plan of the Father. They were broken to the ultimate extent that Jesus was obedient unto suffering the scourge of sin for all humanity. Had Jesus been thinking of His own reputation, His own glory, His own holiness, His own comfort, He would not have endured the Cross. He would have refused the shame and reproach that becoming sin for us heaped upon Him. However, Christ voluntarily broke His selfhood, surrendered to the loving will of the Father, and became the holy, complete sacrificial Offering for all the rebellion of the human race.

It is obvious that Christ's relationship to His Heavenly Father was basically dependent upon His utter submission to the Father's will. The fellowship and communion that Jesus had with Him was totally dependent upon His humble obedience to the Father. The salvation of sinful humanity thus depended upon His obedience. Therefore the "broken body" of Christ's own sentiments becomes a sacramental example to every penitent heart who believes on Him. It becomes a spiritual element of communion in which every follower of Christ may participate.

Just as Jesus had His Gethsemane, saying, "Father, not my will, but thine be done," so must every Christian give total consent to the compulsion of yielding all unto God. It is in this state of mind, this humble spirit and disposition, that the redemption of Christ has its virtue and efficacy. Also it is in lifting us to this disposition that we are made partakers of the body of Christ. We receive the "broken body" of Jesus Christ as an element of Communion only when we acknowledge our own dependence in Him. Thus, the way of communion is open only as we admit that we possess no good within ourselves. We must actually lay aside our selfish claim to be or to do anything contrary to the will of God, as Jesus did. We commune with Him only as we present ourselves as empty vessels which God must fill.

Thus, as Andrew Murray asserts, such brokenness before God is the true self-denial to which our Lord calls us. It is in this, above and before everything, in which the conformity to Jesus consists. Only as we are humble may communion with Christ actually exist. He teaches us that true humility takes its rise and finds its strength in the knowledge that it is God who worketh all in all. If we are really partakers of the "broken body" of the Lord Jesus, we will come to recognize that this element of Communion represents the being and doing nothing of ourselves that God may be all. Our place is to give Him pre-eminence, to yield to Him in perfect resignation and dependence, fully consenting to be and to do nothing of ourselves. This is the life Christ reveals and imparts -- a life to God that comes through death to sin and self.⁵

Again, the apostle expresses this brokenness, this exemplary humbling of our Lord, in such a manner that we are thus exhorted to be participators in the same attitude. Once more let us consider Phil. 2:5-8:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

In other words, Christians are to be of Christ's mind; we are to bear a resemblance to His life if we would have the benefit of His death. Rom. 8:9 declares, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The mind of Christ was totally concerned with pleasing the Father. He was eminently humble, and this is

what we are to particularly learn of Him. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). Thus, in order to be like-minded with Christ, we must be lowly-minded. We must walk in the same spirit and follow the steps of the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to sufferings and death for us. He did this, not only to satisfy God's justice, and to pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example, that we might follow in His steps.⁶

The significance of the "broken body" of Christ as an element of Communion is established because He always did the will of the Father. He would not have consistently obeyed the Father had He not broken His independent selfhood. The body of our whole being is the self, identified as apart from all other selves, possessing the autonomy of a self-will. Being a man, a self, Jesus possessed a self-will. But, as we have seen, He completely surrendered its authority to the will of the Father.

Hence, when Jesus completely sacrificed His whole body to achieve the purpose of the Father, He became the Mediator to intercede between God and man. His perfect human communion and fellowship with God appropriates grace whereby His followers may have likemindedness, achieving spiritual communion with God through Him. His "broken body," therefore, becomes an element of Communion to us only as we break ourselves before God.

However, the humility of Christ was not only a temporary sentiment, at times subdued by selfishness, or wakened up and brought into exercise only when He thought strongly on God. It was the very broken spirit of His whole life. We find that Jesus was just as humble in His intercourse with men as He was with God. He felt himself the Servant of God for the human race, whom God created and loved.

As a natural consequence, Christ counted himself as the Servant of men, that through Him God might do His work of love. He so treasured the approval of the Father, and was so submitted to His will, He never sought His own honor or asserted His power to vindicate himself. The whole spirit of Jesus Christ was that of a life yielded to the direction of God. Therefore this humble, submissive life of Christ is the very essence of the virtue of His redemption. It is herein that His "broken body" of self is "meat indeed" to our God-starved souls.

Thus, as our Lord speaks in John 6:32 if, He refers to himself as the great Gift of God and the "true bread." Christ is Bread because He is to the soul that which bread is to the body. He nourishes and supports the spiritual life of the believer as bread does the bodily life; it is the staff of life. The doctrine of the gospel concerning communion with God through Christ is that He is the Mediator between God and man. He is our Peace, the Supplier of our righteousness, our great Redeemer. Therefore, in comparison, our bodies could live better without food than our souls could live without the "broken bread" of Christ. He is the "bread of God," the divine Bread which the Father has supplied to be the Food of our souls. He is the Bread of God's family, His children's Bread.

The Levitical sacrifices were also called the "bread of God" (cf. Lev. 21: 21-22), but Christ is the Great Sacrifice. Moreover, Christ is the "bread of life," alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden. It was to Adam the seal of that part of the covenant, "Do this and live," of which he might eat and live. Jesus Christ is the "bread of life," for He is the Fruit of the "tree of life"; He is thus the "living bread."⁷

Although bread is itself an inanimate thing and does not nourish except by the assistance of the faculties of a living body, because Christ is himself "living bread," He nourishes by His own power those who partake. Furthermore, the bread of Christ never molds or gets stale as the other heavenly manna did, for He is the everlasting Bread. He is ever living, even though He died. The doctrine of Christ crucified is still as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever, and the mediation of His life remains as valuable and efficacious as when He walked and talked among men.

Hence, by the bread of His "broken body," Jesus Christ still offers the sustenance of life unto a sinful, dying world. He offers not only physical life in harmony with God, but also spiritual and everlasting life. He is the Life Source of the soul in union and communion with God here, and in the vision and fruition of Him hereafter. The manna of the wilderness only preserved and supported life; it did not preserve and perpetuate life, much less restore it. But Christ gives life to those that were dead in trespasses and sin.

None are excluded from the benefits of the bread of Christ -- only such as exclude themselves. Our Lord came to put life into the minds of men, principles productive of pleasing and acceptable lives before God. Because Jesus is the "bread which came down from heaven," His condescension denotes a continual communication of light, life, and love from God to believers through Christ. Therefore the brokenness of the body of Christ represents more than His matchless humility and self-denial. It denotes the ability of Christ to communicate, to impart His light, His life, and His love to all who join together with Him in surrender and service to do the will of the Father.

Here, then, is our point of Communion contact, the bread of His "broken body" and our surrendered wills. His perfect humanity becomes the living source of our nourishment as we manifest utter dependence upon His grace. Thus, the "broken body" of our Lord and Saviour is an element of Communion providing spiritual food for our souls. Its virtue is communicated to us as we believe on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and as we similarly partake by offering our bodies, our sentiments, as a perpetual, submissive sacrifice to the holy will of God. It is only as we are partakers of this "broken" nature of our Lord that we find sustenance, that we find grounds to commune with God in Christ. Thus, in Rom. 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul admonishes:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

This is a practical appeal that Christians will maintain themselves in a humble position that is necessary to holy communion. Christian living is inseparably connected with Christian believing, and continuous blessings require continuous self-sacrifice. We, in our innermost wills, in the depths of our nature, must be surrendered and set apart to God before our outward self can be laid on the altar. Hence there must first be an internal surrender before there can be a worthwhile external consecration. In order, then, for us to have unhindered communion with God through Christ, He must have possession of our whole selves. It must be an all-inclusive sacrifice, surrendering all claims to ourselves as Jesus did. The whole of life is to be a temple where the Spirit of Christ meets us in fellowship.⁸

However, as Oswald Chambers suggests, these previous verses specifically apply only from the ultimate standpoint of entire sanctification. To those who have entered into His life by means of His cross, our Lord says, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23b). In so doing we give away to God our right to ourselves, for the right to ourselves is the only thing we have to give to God. Such an idea of self-sacrifice is that of giving back to God the best we have in order that He may make it His and ours for ever. Yet, it is not only that we give up our right to ourselves to Christ, but that we determinedly relate ourselves to His life in such a way that we may be appealed to only by the things that appeal to Him, and do in the world only the things with which He is associated.⁹

Thus, unless we so yield ourselves, willing even to give up good things for Jesus, we have no realization who He is, or what communion with Him means. The element of the "broken body" is strange and foreign to us, and we have no common spirit with Christ. It is only when we allow ourselves, our sentiments to be broken before God, and humbly rely on the virtuous atonement of Jesus Christ, that we are made partakers and participants in His disposition. Then we have fellowship with God in Christ through the element of His "broken body," and His blessings are communicated to us.

B. The Shed Blood

As in the Lord's Supper, there is another element of communion with Christ. Not only is the "broken body" of Christ a point of communication for us, but there is also the constituent of His shed blood. Although we have previously considered the unique virtue of the sinless blood of Jesus in connection with the efficacy of the atonement, let us now regard the element of the Blood as a further means of communion with Him.

Again we look to the words of our Saviour as found in John 6:51, 53-57, 63. He particularly speaks of His blood as being the carrier of spiritual life, as being drink that is necessary for our livelihood. The death of Christ to self would not alone suffice for the atonement of man's sinful rebellion toward God. He had to, as it were, pour out His life's blood and die in every respect. Thus, by virtue of His poured-out life's blood in dying, we have means whereby we might be participants of His resurrected life.

As we have already discussed, from the old covenant, "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). The new covenant that Jesus Christ represents fulfills this requirement by the shedding of His innocent blood, and dying in our stead as a Propitiation for all our sin. The writer of the Book of Hebrews expresses it thus:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:14-15).

The shedding of Jesus' physical blood would have been without virtue had not His spirit, His whole life, been without fault before God. The efficacy of the blessed blood of Christ for the sin of the world lies in the fact that as the dying Son of Man He became the perfect Sacrifice. And in pouring out His precious blood He became the Fountainhead of our redemption and life. His spirit was so united with the spirit of God that His life's blood became significant for our spiritual life.

In other words, mankind is totally dependent upon the Blood, involving the death of Jesus. We are dependent on Him, not only as a Propitiation for sin, but also as the Intervening Element on the altar of God that establishes communion with Him. Although man, because of sin, is not able to offer a perfect blood sacrifice, he may be a partaker of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. He may accept its efficacy and by faith receive of its benefits. Thus one may open communion with the Lord by acknowledging his dependence on the vicarious element of Jesus' blood as the only effective offering for his sin.

Therefore we must recognize that the blood of Christ is efficacious for every need of the human heart. The value of all previous sacrifices totally resides in their antitype connection with the new testament blood of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The virtue of the blood of Christ was what He was by nature, and His sacrifice is permeated with infinite worth. Whereas the Levitical order of sacrifices could so cleanse and sanctify the flesh as to enable worshipers to appear before God on earth, the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ can purge the conscience to serve God in righteousness. Christ operated in the realm

of absolute reality, and the sacrifice of His own blood met the human need as a response to God's mind and requirement in relation to sin.¹⁰

It is the mind of God that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (cf. Heb. 9:22). This is the apparent reason why blood was prohibited as sustenance in the Old Testament (cf. Lev. 3:17) as well as in the New Testament (cf. Acts 15:29). The mysterious and vital principle of the blood was reserved only for the rites of expiation and purification, because it was the carrier of life. Thus the pouring out of blood as an offering to God represents the giving of a life for a life, and this is expiation by substitution.

The blood of Christ, which contained the power of endless life, when poured out in sacrificial death for man's sin, became that which "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). This power of the blood of Christ is extolled in Rev. 5:9-12, declaring:

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, . . . the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

It is important to remember that the emphasis concerning atonement for sin is not only on the death of the sacrifice, but upon death involving the shedding of blood. As Lev. 17:11 points out, blood is the substance of life; and as sin involves the forfeiture of life, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Hence Jesus Christ became the only means whereby sinful man may be brought into peaceful communication with God. It is through the mediation of His holy personage, by the pouring out of His life's blood in death, that, in believing on Him and dying to self, we may live. The sinless blood of the Lord Jesus is the only extinguisher of transgression. At the same time, it is the only fountain of life where sinners find justification and may ultimately be sanctified wholly.

It is therefore evident that the shed blood of Jesus is the vital remedy for the sin of man, preparing him to meet the holiness of God. Real communion with Christ cannot be achieved except we plead the efficacious atonement of His blood for our sins. Unless we accept the meaning of His outpoured blood in death for us, it is useless to recognize the complete dedication of the body of Christ to the purpose of God, and it is useless to admit the truth of His teachings.

Communion with Christ is meaningless if we accept just HIS life and not the reason of His death. If we would partake of the element of the life's blood of our Lord, we must offer up our whole lives to Him. We cannot give our bodies and reserve our hearts, nor can we serve Him in spirit without that devotion having

controlling influence over the flesh also. If we would truly partake of Christ in Communion, the whole man must go -- or nothing.

Certainly there was no selfish reservation in Jesus Christ. He freely submitted himself flesh and blood-body and whole life -- everything, to the laying down of His life in sacrifice. Hence, if we are to be identified with Him in the forgiveness of our sins through His blood, we must also be identified with Him in a living exemplification of His spirit, by walking "even as he walked" (I John 2:6). To our faith in Him as our Sacrifice we must necessarily add a devout imitation of Him as our Model. We must submit ourselves to God, as He submitted himself; and we must give our lives entirely to do the whole will of the Father, as He gave himself. The criterion of communion with Christ is whether or not we have His spirit, His blood applied to our lives. "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9b).

As J. A. Seiss declares, if we have effectually laid hold upon Jesus as the only Sacrifice for our sin, we must go on to glorify Him in our spirits. No attempt to be holy can ever succeed before God unless it is founded upon atonement by the Blood, the communal blood of the Lamb. Though we are redeemed by His blood, and justified gratuitously by believing on Him, we are under the obligation of the law of grace to live lives of virtue and moral uprightness. We are bound through Christ to a practical holiness, and the Lord has given us the pattern in His own person and life.¹¹

In other words, there is vital power in the blood of Jesus. It is a power that not only saves from sin, but establishes communion and fellowship between God and the redeemed. Moreover, if the precious Blood has washed us in forgiveness, the pathway of communion with Christ eventually demands that our whole lives be cleansed and purged "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). This expresses the further work of sanctification by the Spirit.

However, let us note that our sanctification by the Spirit is built upon justification by the Blood of atonement. It is only when we have received Jesus Christ in His character of a Sacrifice for our sin that we are in a condition to render ourselves "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Everything in the Christian's life -- justification and sanctification, the forgiveness of our sins, the purging of our lives, the acceptableness of our services, our hopes, and our spiritual joys are all rooted in Christ's vicarious sufferings. His blood is the fountain of all our lives and the foundation of all communion. There is no particle of salvation or fellowship that a believer has that is not derived from the atonement of the blood of Jesus.

Christ became the verification of the God-ordered Levitical sacrifices. Even from the days of Adam, blood sacrifices and meat offerings went together. In like manner, justification and sanctification will also remain connected and inseparable.

Now, symbolically, one must bring a whole burnt offering unto God, manifesting a true, confiding faith in Jesus Christ as the Lamb slain for the expiation of his sins. Thereafter he soon presents his meat offering by the entire surrender of himself as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Even so, the sanctified believer still brings his peace offering with the distinct consciousness that he owes everything to the Blood that was shed for him on Calvary. Hence these offerings point up the way to communion with God through Christ, with the Blood as the basis.¹²

Again, let us note that the altar on which the offering was placed was itself sanctified. Exod. 29:36-37 states:

"And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy."

In the New Testament sense, Jesus Christ is not only the Sacrifice for sin, but He is also the personification of the altar on which the sacrifice is offered. Water, blood, and oil are suggested by the words "cleanse," "atonement," and "anoint" (cf. Exod. 29:36) as being the means of the sanctification of the altar. It is evident that the shed blood was the foundation of all. With regard to the Lord Jesus as our Altar, consider that He was baptized with water by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and that immediately following the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, signifying His anointing. Jesus needed no blood atonement personally, for He was without sin. Thus Christ, as our Altar, sanctified himself: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19).

However, for our redemption our Lord provided both the altar and the blood sacrifice for our sin, furnishing grace for both our justification and our sanctification. Thus, Heb. 13:12 states: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Under the old covenant the victim personalizing sin was wholly burned without the camp, symbolizing God's wrath against sin. But its blood was brought into the immediate presence of God as being most precious to Him. So Jesus Christ suffered the wrath of God without the gate for our sin, and He entered into the presence of God within the veil.

Hence, as H. Orton Wiley says, there is but one sacrifice for sin at the Christian's altar, the Blood of the atonement. Also there is only one means of sustenance, the indwelling of Christ through the Spirit. Moreover there is fully accomplished by the one sacrifice that likeness to Christ and that communion with the Father which could not otherwise be attained.¹³

It is therefore evident that, once the sinner believes on the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ to atone for his sin, communion is opened with Christ. There is communing in believing, for pardon from sin involves intimate divine-human

contact. Thus, when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we accept His blood as sufficient to atone for our sins and to reconcile us unto God. When His blood covers our sin we enter into His righteousness and into His life, and we have fellowship as friend with Friend. The Father seems no longer unapproachable, for we have access to His throne through the blessed blood of Christ.

It has been previously mentioned that under the old sacrificial system there was a meat offering which followed the burnt offering, the blood sacrifice for atonement. The meat offering was a bloodless oblation, essentially expressing gratitude and thanksgiving. Both the burnt offering and meat offering refer to Jesus, and to the sinner as represented in Him. The former offering presented the Saviour in His character as "a propitiation for our sins." He is exhibited as our Model and Sanctifier, through whom we ourselves are also offered to the Lord. Thus the first offering relates to justification, the forgiveness and atonement of sin. However the latter relates to our sanctification, our conformity to Christ's holiness. In the one we see penitence laying its hand on the head of the innocent sufferer, and praying to be spared for that sufferer's sake. In the other we finally see gratitude making its living return for the unspeakable gift obtained through the former.¹⁴

It is in such a connection that the apostle admonishes in Rom. 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let us remember that our Altar, Jesus Christ, sanctified himself with His own blood, that He might also set us apart for holy service. When we lay our meat offering on Christ, the consecrated Altar, our communion with Him is further enhanced. We are thus sanctified wholly. Both Testaments declare it is the altar that sanctifies the gift, the offering (cf. Exod. 29:37 and Matt. 23:19).

Hence we are to be the meat offering, a living sacrifice, laid and bound to Christ, the Altar. When we thus consecrate ourselves, His holy blood comes in contact with our gift, and we are sanctified. However, without the precious blood of Christ sanctifying himself, the Altar, our gift would be an unholy thing. In this manner the blood of Jesus was shed that we might be reconciled unto God by the forgiveness of sin, and by the cleansing of our sinful nature.

The Blood, the Blood is all our plea. It is indeed the foundational element of our communion with Christ. There can be no substitute. Only when the Blood is applied to all our sin do we find the fellowship, the peace, and the satisfaction of knowing Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. It is true that the "broken body," the broken sentiments of self, is necessary as an emblem of Communion. In order to have communion with Christ we are to manifest a unity of His brokenness before God. However, it is only when the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is applied to our every relationship that the necessary and ultimate meaning of communion with Him can be realized. Fellowship cannot be perfectly restored except the sin problem be completely resolved. Only the Blood, the substance of life, can overcome the effects of sin, which is ultimate separation from God in spiritual death.

The Blood, then, as an element of Communion, is actually taken only as we believe in its virtue and accept its benefits. We have communion through the blood of Jesus only as His life becomes our life. And it is through the regenerating power of His blood that we are transformed from a life of sin to a life of holiness.

However, let us not hastily assume that justification, or even sanctification, is the extent of communion with Christ. The occasion of our "meat offering" is but the entrance to a closer relation, a closer fellowship with Christ. The religious experiences of justification and sanctification open the way for such communion. But our continued reliance on the "broken body" and "the blood," our continued obedience to the will of God, provide an active basis for love and fellowship that does not fade away.

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06 -- FELLOWSHIP AT THE LORD'S TABLE

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He set forth the provision whereby His followers could maintain communion with Him, even though He was to depart from them in the flesh. In John 14:16-18, we read:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

The Holy Spirit of Christ, the One with whom the disciples had walked and talked and eaten and dwelt, the One who had died for their sins, was to come and make their lives His habitation. The table, as it were, was prepared for their continued spiritual sustenance. This made unbroken communion possible, if they continued in His love. Note the words of Jesus: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Among the last instructions the Lord gave His followers, testing their love, were His words: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Pentecost was the experiential occasion when the promise of the Father was realized, when the appointment with the Spirit of Christ was kept. Whereas the sanctification of Christ's followers was contained in the efficacy of His shed blood, the work of the infilling of the Spirit did not actually occur until the 120 offered their "meat offering" of submission to the purging of their very nature.

Thus a precious and vital thing happened at Pentecost-the Spirit of Christ came to abide in the hearts of men in the power of God. By so coming He acknowledged the gratitude, the faith, and the need of the believers gathered in that Upper Room. Notice the difference of communion that now takes place. In John 14:17 the transition from "with you" is carried out to "in you."

Along with that difference is the change in Christ from limited humanity to victorious exaltation and coronation, enabling Him to intercede on the believer's behalf. Therefore, through the blessed indwelling presence of Christ at Pentecost, a progression in communion is achieved. The believer is made one with Christ, just as the Son is one with the Father: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one . . ." (John 17:23).

Hence we see that Pentecost instituted a new kind of fellowship, which was engaged when the disposition of sin was put off and the Spirit of Holiness was received. It is found in the community of the Spirit of Christ, and it issues in our community of life in His holy name. The kingdom of God is now a new theocracy, permeated, dominated, and sanctified in the spiritual association with the abiding Spirit of Pentecost. The new thing is not necessarily the wind, the fire, or the gift of tongues, but it is the possession of the Spirit of Christ by each for the good of all. Thus He would unify us into one body, guide us into all truth, and strengthen us for all service.¹

Although the word communion passes through various phases in the New Testament, and is variously translated, the idea of sharing seems to run through them all. In Luke 5:10 it is said that James and John, sons of Zebedee, were partners with Simon. The Apostle says of Titus (II Cor. 8:23) that he was his partner and fellow laborer; the two were colleagues in the ministry of the Church. Of Philemon and Onesimus the word is used in the more intimate sense of comradeship.²

Therefore, the believer's communion with the Holy Spirit of Christ, at His table, indicates a fellowship as partners, colleagues, comrades with Him. Even now, we as believers are partners with Christ in vocation (or calling) and resources; and we are sharers in work and in power. Such communion involves continued communication, maintaining the common stock for common ends.

The teaching of the New Testament insists upon this grace of fellowship within the Church. The Christians at Philippi were commended because they communicated with the Apostle Paul in the matter of giving and receiving (Phil. 4:15-16), and the Romans were exhorted to communicate "to the necessities of the saints" (Rom. 12:13, A.R.V.). The rich are charged "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (I Tim. 6:18).

Moreover, this idea of partnership is carried into the highest aspects of our calling. We are called of God "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9); we are partakers of His sufferings and His comfort (cf. II Cor. 1:4-7; Phil. 3:10); and through Him we become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). In all of these aspects the Holy Spirit of Christ enters into partnership with us, and becomes to us Colleague and Comrade, sharing what we have, and admitting us into His mission of calling the lost unto redemption, and placing at our disposal all the resources of His person and power.

Furthermore, in Heb. 3:14, we read: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." Wiley indicates the word *metochoi*, translated "partakers," is also translated "partners," "sharers," or "companions." However, there seem to be grounds for preferring the translation "partakers" in that, as Christ in partaking of our flesh and blood (cf. Heb. 2:14) became One of us, so we spiritually become partakers of Him.³

Thus, our salvation consists in the possession of the Spirit of Christ, and He is our Way, our Truth, and our Life. We are not merely companions or comrades in an outward sense, but sharers, partners of a common life. Christ dwells within us through the Spirit in a deeper, richer fellowship. This inner, spiritual fellowship is a continuous experience, hallowed with new manifestations of His presence day by day. Therefore genuine Christian experience becomes "fellowship at the Lord's table," for it is a conscious association with Christ. We draw grace and sustenance from Him, partaking of His life while sharing our lives with Him.

Yet let us remember that this conscious relation with Christ is solely based upon our continued acceptance of Him as Partner in our lives. It is only when we so recognize the necessity of this fellowship that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses our hearts from all sin and keeps them blameless before the throne of God. For in I John 1:7, we read: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The beginning of our confidence in the salvation of God was by faith in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of adoption enabling us to cry from our innermost beings, "Abba, Father." To this was added another witness, that of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. But the pardon of sins and the impartation of new life are only the beginning of fellowship with Christ.

The word "cleanseth" (I John 1:7) signifies particular progress in this fellowship. It refers specially to the completed act of purification, the removal of "the sin" or the cleansing of the "evil heart of unbelief," and thus becomes the basis of a deeper and a more abiding fellowship. "If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast," "if we walk in the light," then this hallowed fellowship is sustained and the blessed blood of Christ avails for all past sins, ignorant or

deliberate; all past impurities, contracted or inherited; and all weaknesses and infirmities to which fallen man is heir.4

Therefore it is by the gift of baptism with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that new vistas of fellowship are unveiled. The very essence of the Christian religion is the realized presence of God within the soul, and this presence is the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son, comes in the coming of the Spirit, and abides in the soul of the believer in the presence of the Spirit. Also, with the coming of the Son through the Spirit, the Father comes and abides. "He will come" . . . "I will come" . . . "We will come," all refer to the coming of the Spirit as promised in our Lord's farewell talk with His disciples (cf. John 14:16-23). In their relation to the human soul, the Father and Son act through and are represented by the Holy Spirit. Each is divine and all are one, providing access whereby a sinner may be saved by grace, a believer may be sanctified, and identified with God.5

However it is not enough to represent the Spirit of God as coming just to be of assistance to man's spirit, supplying strength which he lacks, as an associate or a supernatural auxiliary. The blessed communion and close fellowship we are to have is no single addition of divine power to human power. Rather, the Spirit of God identifies himself with the human self, into which He enters and shares the self-life of the individual believer.

Thus the Spirit of God is individualized in the new personality He creates. He is identified with the human self, and the human self is identified with Him. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the experience of Gal. 2:20 is the result: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Hence the Spirit of God, as a Witness for Jesus, bears testimony to the everlasting perfection, work, and efficacy of Christ's life and death. In so doing, the Spirit gives the believer blessed views of the person, love, righteousness, blood, fullness, mercy, and compassion of the Lord, which draw the whole heart, and knit it to Jesus. Moreover, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, He goes on to unveil the Father's everlasting love, giving the believer repeated discoveries of it by a more complete and open communion with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit occurring at the believer's Pentecost produces the table fare of the Lord. He produces holy and heavenly joy in the soul, as He applies the Word with power. He opens and explains the rich, free, pure, and sovereign grace contained in the exceeding great and precious promises, He also gives the mind a spiritual relish and satisfaction in being subservient to Christ, and He raises a joy in the soul by its discoveries of the Father's everlasting love, manifested in the precious person and work of the Lord Jesus.6

Let us be quick to acknowledge that the sanctified life depends upon a crisis experience, inviting the Holy Spirit to purify and indwell the believer's life. But it also anticipates a continued walk of obedience with Christ, following the leadings of the Spirit. More and more the Christian is brought to see that Christ's person and righteousness have become his glory and perfection. Therefore he has no hope in God except what is founded thereon; not on any inherent grace, on no fruits of sanctification, nor on any of his own comforts or experiences. The Christian's reliance must be totally in Christ, nothing but Christ.

To be found in Christ's person, clothed with His righteousness, and cleansed in His most precious blood, should be the constant prayer of every believer's heart. And this prayer will arise from the Spirit, who now gives him clearer apprehensions of Christ's essential, mediatorial, and relative glories. It inspires the mind to more fully conceive that Jesus Christ, the glorious God-Man, is the Father's and the Spirit's, all in all. Hence, the way is made for the sanctified believer, under the anointings of the Holy Spirit, to study what it must be, how great the grace, to have the Christ as Head of union and communion with God. Furthermore, it is explained by the Holy Spirit, and manifested to the heart, that union to the person of Christ is the foundation of all hope, interest in, and communion with God.

Thus, fellowship at the table of the Lord brings us to view the mediatorial glories of the blessed Lamb of God. It conveys a new conception of His essential glory which gives worth to all. When we behold Him in this manner, our very being cries out, as Paul did, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). Hence the Holy Spirit carries on His work of faith in the soul. And as we are led into closer communion with the Saviour in our walk with Him, we find the knowledge of Christ to be the foundation of all our faith, hope, and love.

In the fellowship of this communion, we have increasing evidence of our interest in Christ and His work, and this is the fruit of union to His person. Ultimately, our hearts are directed deeper and deeper into the love of God as we have continual communion with Christ. Hence our souls' prosperity in the blessings of salvation, in the experience and fruit of sanctification, growth in grace, and holy consolation, is in proportion as we have communion with Jesus Christ, and as our hearts are happy in the Heavenly Father's love.⁷

The Lord Jesus sets forth the Father's love, and ever reminds us of His own affection to us. In praying to the Father, Christ said, "Thou . . . hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). And in manifesting His personal love to His followers, He said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). We continue in His love by spiritual meditations on His love. This is accomplished by living within the bounds of His love, and by abiding around the table of the Lord, where our souls receive sustenance and where our lives glorify His name.

Therefore all our growth in grace must be the fruit of having our minds saturated and flavored with enjoy merits and intercourse with Christ. We are sanctified for the express purpose of bringing forth fruit unto holiness, to the glorification of the Three in One. Yet the promotion of such fruit can be brought about only through the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit sanctifies that grace and holiness may flourish in the place of sin and evil. This is made possible because God has loved us with an everlasting love; for "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16).

Thus God seals us in Christ by His Spirit to give us an indisputable evidence that we are His beloved, one with Christ, united to Him, and saved unto everlasting life. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of all of this in our hearts, for He has also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (Cf. II Cor. 1:22.) The Spirit impresses this upon us by the Word, and by His own immediate testimony, in the name and authority of His own personality. Hence, as we are sealed, we have the testimony in our own souls that we are the Lord's. The apostle declares:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Rom. 8:16-17)."

The fruit, then, of fellowship around the Lord's table is joy in the Holy Spirit, even "joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is because the Spirit of God and glory resides within the believer in sanctifying power, and He rests on him, anointing and sealing that believer unto the day of total redemption. Thus the presence of the Holy Spirit in heart and life becomes the promise of future glory as He reveals unto us our part in the Father's love, and our part in the work of His coequal Son.

As the Spirit dwells in us, we have the peculiar fellowship the Lord promised, saying:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

These words of Jesus not only referred to the disciples of His days on earth, but they include us also. The years of time are again spanned as Christ further states:

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21, 23).

Therefore, we must conclude that fellowship at the Lord's table indicates a realm of communion set up within us; for the indwelling is that of a real, personal, spiritual Presence. Pentecost, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, is not a gift that can be located somewhere in the brain or heart of a man, but it is a personal Spirit that indwells another personality. It is a Personality within a personality, by which the Spirit becomes the Life of one's life, the Soul of one's soul.

He that is Christ's not only has the Spirit of Christ ruling in him, leading him, guiding him, and preparing his body and soul for glorification. He also has Christ as the new animating Soul of his soul, Spirit of his spirit, repeating in himself the mystery of the union of two natures in one personality. This is the mystery of grace that passeth all understanding, and the miracle of grace by which the Incarnation is perpetuated in the body of Christ. This is the mystery of the ages. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14: 20).⁸

The Spirit that dwells in us quickens our mortal bodies. It does not create new faculties, but it awakens the dormant and develops the latent. The natural endowments of a man are the basis of the Spirit's energy, but there is no part of a man's being that is not vitalized and strengthened by His power. Thus the Spirit gives fullness of life.

By fellowship at the Lord's table, our life is in Christ. It is from Him, in Him, and to Him. In John 10:10, Jesus states: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Hence all Christlikeness of life and character is by the transforming power of life through the Spirit of the Living God. He is the Lord and Giver of Life. He gives the life that is in Christ, and in all things He works through the law of the Spirit of Life.

The Scripture is very clear concerning our relationship with God in Christ. I Cor. 1:9 states: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." True fellowship can exist only where there is a mutual agreement on equal and favorable terms. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) God requires that we walk in holiness before Him. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). This is the only way that God would condescend to walk with men, to make His abode with them, and take them into His confidence, and commune with them as Friend with friend.

It is then imperative that a man separate himself from all sin if he would have fellowship with Christ. Moreover, it is necessary that a man continually dispose himself against all evil if he would maintain such fellowship. Again, the Scripture clearly states the problem. In II Cor. 6:14-17, we read:

"For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ... Wherefore come out from among

them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."

The Spirit of God is faithful to quicken (make alive) the spirit of man that was dead in trespasses and sin. Then the body of the believer becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. However He does not dwell in the flesh as such; the Spirit dwells in spirit. He works and fashions the outward from the inward, and the material through the spiritual. Thus the Holy Spirit dwells in the spirit of man; and from that center of life and power He quickens, directs, controls, and sanctifies the whole man.⁹

Consequently there comes to the heart a deep sense of security in the life and love of God. It comes as peace after the turmoil of sin without and within. When the Spirit comes, He brings the mind of Christ, and baptizes us into the fellowship of His redeeming love. This is the abundant life Jesus Christ came to bring -- the life filled with His Spirit, by communion at His table. However, fellowship at the Lord's table will be to no ultimate avail except we continue to abide in Him. This was the tragedy of Judas Iscariot, who had the high privilege of communing with Christ at the Last Supper. Yet he did not abide -- he departed into the night of this world. Even so, Spirit-filled Christians, who have had wonderful experiences of communion and fellowship at the spiritual table of the Lord, must be constantly aware of the necessity to abide where God is blessing.

Therefore, abiding anticipates a permanent arrangement, not a mere temporary visit. Communion and fellowship cease whenever we cease to abide. We ought to be aware of the possibility of failure to abide even though the Spirit of God has led us into deep truth, and even though we have experienced the joys of hallowed fellowship. In achieving the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we reach the point of abiding. Yet the communion of abiding becomes even sweeter than the fellowship when His Spirit first touched ours.

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07 -- COMMUNION IN ABIDING

In dealing with the sin problem of mankind, the Saviour says, "Come unto me" (of. Matt. 11:28). This invitation is given to the sinner who seeks pardon from his transgressions. It is also given to the believer who is struggling with the unruly disposition of sin, to come and have this nature purged and cleansed. By answering the call of Christ in both respects, the sanctified Christian has experienced that the word of Christ is truth. He fulfills all of His promises, and He would have us to be partakers of all the blessings of His love.

It is to those who have hearkened to the call, "Come unto me," that further invitation comes: "Abide in me" (of. John 15:4). The blessings He gives are all connected with His "Come unto me," but they are enjoyed only as we abide in close fellowship with Him. Thus the call of Christ really means, "Come unto Me to stay

with Me." This was God's object and purpose when He first sought after us to repent.

Our Lord did not die on the cruel Cross at the hands of an angry mob just so we might experience a few passing, refreshing hours with the joy of His love and deliverance in our converted hearts. He did not plan an interlude, after which we would be left wandering in sadness and sin. Moreover, He has destined us to something better than a temporary thrill of feeling the indwelling presence of His Spirit when we are sanctified. We are to progress further than short-lived blessedness enjoyed only in times of special earnestness and prayer, which disappear at our return to those duties in which the most of our lives is spent. Our Lord went through the anguish of Calvary to prepare for us an abiding dwelling within himself, where our whole lives might be spent, where the work of our daily lives might be done, and where all the while we might enjoy unbroken communion with Him.

Furthermore, notice that Jesus did not say "Come to Me and abide with Me," but He said, "Abide in me." The intercourse was not only to be unbroken, but most intimate and complete. He opened up all His divine fullness of life and love, and offers to take us up into its fellowship, to make us wholly one with Him. All that we have already received from the Lord -- pardon and peace, the Spirit and His grace -- are but preliminary to such abiding. And all that we may visualize in the future -- holiness and fruitfulness and everlasting glory -- are but the natural outcome of abiding in Christ. Union with Him, and thus with the Father, is Christ's highest object for us.¹ Hence, let us consider the words of our Lord as He expresses himself in the parable of the vine (John 15:1-12).

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

This passage is the outstanding expression of abiding in Christ. Thus it gives a complete illustration of the meaning of our Lord's command, and the union to

which He invites us. The parable teaches that the connection between the vine and the branch is a living one, and no external, temporary union will suffice. The branch, whether an original or a grafted one, is such only by the Creator's own work. Because of the attachment of the branch to the vine, the life, the sap, the fatness, and the fruitfulness of the vine are communicated to the branch.

The physical truth of the parable represents the exact relationship of Christ to the believer, just as the vine is to the branch. Our union with the Lord Jesus is no work of human wisdom or human will, but it is an act of God, by which the closest and most complete life-union is effected between Christ and the redeemed sinner. Such a life relationship signifies sonship, and because we are sons, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).

Therefore the same Spirit which dwells in the Son also becomes the Life of the believer. We become one with Him, in the unity of that one Spirit, and in the fellowship of that same life which is in Christ Jesus. As between the vine and the branch, it is the life-union that genuinely makes us one. Moreover, the parable teaches us that the union is so close between the vine and the branch that each is nothing without the other, that each is wholly and only for the other. Thus Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5b).

It is the daily inflowing of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit that is our only power to bring forth fruit. We are dependent on Him for each moment, for we live alone in Him. Also, by the wonderful condescension of the grace of Christ, He has made himself dependent on us, the branches, that through us His fruit may be found. Neither does the vine draw its nourishment from the soil just for itself -- all it has is at the disposal of the branches. So it is with Christ, the Vine; how completely He gives himself for us and to us!

Thus Jesus said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them . . ." (John 17:22). And again He said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Hence, as our Vine, all the fullness and all His richness are for us, His branches. The vine does not live for itself, and keeps nothing for itself, but exists only for the branches. In the same manner, all that Christ is in heaven He is for us; He has no interest apart from ours, and He stands before the Father as our Representative, uniting us with the Father.

However, as all the vine possesses belongs to the branch, so then all the branch possesses belongs to the vine. The branch does not exist for itself, but to bear fruit that proclaims the excellence of the vine. It has no reason of existence except to be of value to the vine. This is the image of the believer, his complete dependency on the Lord for virtue, and the necessity of entire consecration to the service of Christ. Because the Lord Jesus completely gives himself to satisfy the needs of the believer, we are thus constrained to be wholly the Lord's. As we realize the interdependent relationship between the Vine and the branches, there is but one

purpose for us to think of and to live for -- the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of Christ, the Vine.

Therefore the parable teaches us the object of our union with Jesus Christ. We, as the branches, are for fruit and fruit alone. The Lord emphasizes this point by saying, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away . . ." (John 15:2). Our lives are not supported in the Vine just so we may produce leaves, Although the branch needs leaves for the maintenance of its own life and the perfection of its fruit, the branch is to bear fruit for the benefit of those around.

When the believer enters into this close, abiding communion and unity as a branch in Jesus Christ, the Vine, he sees that he must deny self, and live entirely for Christ and his fellow men. As the Lord Jesus came to love, to seek, and to save the lost, so every branch is to live as the Vine lives. Thus the Father, the Husbandman, makes us one with Jesus, the Vine, so we might bring forth "fruit" (John 15:2), "more fruit" (15:2), and "much fruit" (15:5).

Fruit, then, is the evidence of vital union with Christ. It glorifies the Father, and manifests the true discipleship of the believer when he so abides. The life of the believer as a branch of the Vine ever remains one of dependence and obedience. The life of Christ as the Vine was fixed as one of dependence and submission to the Father, as the Husbandman. Hence union with Christ (cf. John 15:1-8) leads to communion with God (cf. 15:9-17), and to disunion with the world (cf. 15:18-16: 4). Such a life of habitual nearness of heart to Christ, of love to His person and subjection to His Word, is the secret of a life of fruit bearing and of joy.

However, it is to be noted that "every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (15:2). To abide in communion with Christ also means we must withstand the purging and cleansing of the Husbandman. Thus, in His parable, Jesus compares the need of the pruning of the branches in a vine to the need of purging those who would abide in Him. Even fruitful branches, in order to increase their fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning. That which is superfluous and luxuriant, which hinders growth and fruit, fulness, is cut off and taken away. In the believer, such superfluity may be expressed in the form of notions, passions, or humors; and Christ desires to purge these by His Word, His Spirit, and His providence -- by degrees in the proper season. This may be accomplished by affliction and trial.²

In this manner the Father would lead us to enter more deeply into the love of Christ. Too many times prosperity and enjoyment satisfy us too easily, causing us to forget our dependency, dulling our spiritual perception, and making us unfit for close communion with Him. It is a blessing in disguise when the Father, the Husbandman, comes with chastisement or allows trouble to come to us. Then the world loses its glamour, becoming dark, hopeless, and unattractive; and then when we lean all the more on Christ we find hope and joy that teach us to abide in Him as

our only Portion. Thus the object of the purging trial is to cause us to abide in Christ all the more, and thereby bring forth more fruit.

Moreover, we are to so abide in Christ that we will become partakers of all the rich blessings God designed for us even in the time of trial. By so abiding, the purposes of God's wisdom become clearer, the assurance of His unchanging love becomes stronger, and the power of His Spirit fulfills in us the promise: He chasteneth us for our profit, "that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

As we abide in Christ, our crosses become the means of fellowship with His cross, and by bearing our crosses we gain access into the mysteries of His cross. We become aware of the mystery of the curse which He bore for us, of the death to sin in which we partake with Him, and of His love which sent Him into all our sorrows as our sympathizing High Priest.

Thus we are to abide in Christ that we may grow in conformity to our blessed Lord in His sufferings, and we will have a deeper experience of the reality and tenderness of His love. If we abide in Christ, the power of the flesh will be mortified, the impatience and self-will of the old nature will be humbled, and place will be made for the meekness and gentleness of our Lord. Hence, if we abide in Christ in the furnace of trial, one like the Son of Man will be seen in the midst as never before. The dross will be purged, the refining of the gold will be accomplished, and Christ's own likeness will be reflected in us.³

Again, by abiding in Christ we find a sure and abundant consolation. The Father so loves us that He does not overlook comforting us. When He comforts, it is to turn the troubled heart to himself to receive the profitable and fruitful blessing of communion with Him. True comfort comes when He makes us partakers of His holiness. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, not only because He suggests comforting thoughts of God's love, but far more, because He makes us holy, and brings us into close communion with God in Christ. He teaches us to abide in Christ because God is found there, and the truest comfort is there also.

In Christ the heart of the Father is revealed, and there can be no higher comfort than to rest in the Father's bosom. Here the fullness of the divine love is revealed, and it is combined with the tenderness of motherly compassion. Moreover, in Christ suffering is consecrated, and it becomes the foretaste of eternal glory, Even in suffering, the Spirit of God and of glory rests on us when we abide in Christ. Thus, affliction cannot prevent us from bringing forth much fruit.

The knowledge of the Father's desire for fruit amidst the pruning should cause us to yield ourselves afresh, and more than ever, to Him. Furthermore, the deeper experience of the tenderness of Christ and the Father's love should urge us to live completely in His glory. Such surrender of self and self-will in the suffering of trials prepares us to sympathize more keenly with the misery of others. In this

manner the chastisement that comes to mold us also fits us to be, as Jesus was, the servant of all.

Jesus Christ himself will be our chief Companion and Comforter at all times. We may rest in the assurance that the results of our trials will be closer communion with Christ and more abundant fruit through Him. Also, we should remember that the Husbandman himself does the pruning on us, and He will ensure the beneficial fulfillment of the soul that yields itself lovingly to His work.

Hence if Christ, the heavenly Vine, has taken the believer as a branch, then He pledges himself by the very nature of things to supply the sap, the nourishment, the life to sustain us to bring forth fruit. The soul need but have one care: to abide closely, fully, and wholly in Him. Through Him we will produce the fruit, and He will work in us all that is needed to make us a blessing to others.

By so abiding in Christ, we receive of Him His Spirit of love and compassion toward sinners, causing us to seek their salvation. Abiding in Christ, our hearts learn to feel the wretchedness of the sinner still in darkness, and the fearfulness of the dishonor done toward God. Believing what our Lord teaches, that He will give His blessing to the world through us, we also become aware that we are only the feeble instruments through which His hidden power does its work.

However, being united with the Lord, the believer no longer considers his own weakness, but counts on the power of Christ that works within him. The great secret, then, of abiding in Christ in communion with Him is the deep conviction that we are nothing and that He is everything. Thus the believer who yields himself wholly up to Christ for service in the spirit of a simple, childlike trust will assuredly bring forth much fruit.

Abiding in Christ, in the fullness of communion, we yield assent to the blessed agreement between the Vine and the branches, that of the fruit all the glory shall be to the Husbandman, the loving Father. Dependence, subjection, self-sacrifice are for the Christian, as for Christ, the blessed path of life. As Christ lived through and in the Father, even so the believer lives in and through Christ. Apart from Christ there is neither life nor fruit, and without the Spirit of Christ there can be neither union nor abiding.

In John 15:1-12, our Lord does not specify the fruit. The emphasis is that all our fruit comes directly from himself. He also specifies the conditions of fruitfulness. We must be united with Christ, the Vine; we must be purged and cleansed by the Father, the Husbandman; we must abide in Christ, and have Him abide in us. These conditions of fruitfulness are also the circumstances of communion.

The Apostle Paul sums up this teaching of the Vine and its branches in the phrase "the fruit of the Spirit." He does not enlarge on the conditions or the

process, for everything is implied in the word "fruit." Paul assumes both conditions and process, and then sets forth the result. This explains the difference between his list of the elements of the fruit of the Spirit and Peter's statement concerning fruitfulness. Paul begins where Peter ends. Paul gives the result, and Peter dwells on the process of cultivation. Peter begins at conversion, by which the soul has escaped corruption, saying:

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:2-8).

It is interesting to note that this process begins in faith and ends in love. Then the Apostle Paul takes up the list: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:22-24). The phrase "fruit of the Spirit" assigns the graces of Christian character to their proper divine source.

Such character is possible only because of the believer's vital union with Christ (cf. John 15:5), and it is wholly the fruit of the Spirit in those who are completely yielded to Him. This fruit does not spring from the root of the carnal nature, for one does not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. Every tree brings forth fruit of its kind. It grows by the life that is in the Vine. Salvation is through grace, by faith, and the Christian virtues are the fruit of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ as we abide in Him. This is the communion of abiding.

However, there are three elements that are necessary within the fiber of the believer if he is to abide in Christ. The communion of abiding in Christ is not the result of an accident. Any spiritual relationship we may have with our Lord is not by chance. We must have faith in Him to abide in Him; we must be obedient if we are to abide in Him; and our abiding in Him is also dependent on the response of our love to His love. These three elements must prevail in our beings if we are to have communion with Christ. A vine requires a unity of purpose from the branch. As the Vine, Christ requires a unity of faith in Him and the Husbandman by every believer. Moreover, He requires conformity to His obedient relationship to the Father, and He desires loving submissiveness that binds the Vine and branch together as an organic whole. Only as the believer is so unified to the whole can he please God, commune with Him, and produce fruit to glorify Him.

A. Abiding In Faith

As Peter's account of the process of fruit bearing begins with faith, so does even the fact of a believer abiding in Christ. If we abide in Christ we shall bear fruit; and as we abide, so we commune with Him. How' ever, faith is the only foundation for such abiding. It is the only basis we have to be acceptable to the Husbandman as being a part of the Vine. Also, our faith in Christ as the Vine is the only means whereby we may be grafted in as branches.

Referring to God, Heb. 11:6 states that "without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Such faith anticipates the prevenient grace of God leading the sinner unto Him. In this sense, faith is not a faculty; faith is the whole man rightly related to God by the power of the Spirit of Christ.

Faith lays claim to the whole man and all that God's grace can make him, just as it claimed the whole of our Lord's life. His life was not cut up into compartments, one part sacred and the other secular. Jesus Christ concentrated on the will of His Father in every detail of His life. This is the normal standard for each of us. The miracle of the gospel is that He can put us into the condition where we will grow into the same image.

The life Jesus Christ lived is made ours by means of His death. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, and faith in Him, we are put into the relationship to God that Jesus had. We cannot have faith in God unless we know Him in the Lord Jesus. God is a mere abstraction to us until we see Him in Jesus and hear Him say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . ." (John 14:9). Only when we see the Father in the Son do we find a foundation for living and a faith that is boundless.⁴

However we should realize that all our individual efforts to conjure faith to abide in Christ will be in vain. Faith is the gift of God, and it becomes personal to us only when we are vitally concerned with our relationship to God. Eph. 2:8 declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Thus faith becomes a tremendously active principle of trust in Jesus Christ which is ready to venture on every word He speaks and every revelation He gives US.

We should consider that we cannot necessarily have faith in every word of Jesus when we think we will. The Holy Spirit, as the Agent of Christ, brings the words of Jesus to our remembrance and applies them to the circumstance we are in, and then it is up to us to take advantage of those particular words. In this manner, "head faith" is tested through individual adversity, and it is turned into a personal, abiding faith as it is applied.

Unless we as believers abide in faith in Christ, we will soon find that our lives are distorted. As James indicates in his Epistle, we are to prove our faith with our lives. This is accomplished by the evidence of fruit. So long as we share the life of our Lord in faith, we shall bear fruit. Whenever a Christian life is framed only by words, and works are lacking, that life is of self and not of Christ.

Thus Jas. 2:17-18 states: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Hence mere experience is not an adequate ground of faith; rather, it is the evidence of faith. Our association with Jesus Christ, abiding in Him, becomes the ultimate ground of our faith.

When we so abide in faith in Jesus Christ, the normal course of our religious experience is expansion followed by concentration. Our faith is not finished when we accept the Lord as our personal Saviour, and it is not outmoded when we are sanctified wholly. When God gives us a vision of what sanctification means, or what the life of faith means, we are responsible to meet its conditions according to the inevitable law that "expansion must be followed by concentration."

This means that we must concentrate on the vision until it becomes a reality to our personal lives. God will continuously bring us into circumstances to make us prove whether we will work out with determined concentration what He has worked in. We are sanctified by God's grace and made one with Jesus in order that we might sanctify our holiness to God as Jesus did (i.e., the holiness that God has worked in us -- it is not of ourselves or our own merit). Jesus said, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself" (John 17:19).

There is no difficulty in becoming sanctified if our wills and affections have at their heart the earnest desire for God's glory. If we are willing for God to crucify in us the thing that makes us everlastingly hanker after our own point of view, our own interests and ambitions, our own self-righteous piety -- if we are willing for all that to be put to death, then, through faith, "the very God of peace [will] sanctify you [us] wholly . . . (I Thess. 5:23).

Such sanctification means a radical and absolute identification with Jesus Christ, abiding in faith, until the springs of His life are the springs of our life. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thess. 5:24). Hence our Lord wants us to face the life of our times abiding in faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. If Our faith is not living and active, it is because our faith is limited by certain doctrines instead of being "the faith of God" (Rom. 3:3).

Moreover, when we abide in faith in Christ, He is the Captain of our faith. He has gained the victory over sin, and Satan is a conquered foe. When we are sanctified and have become His "brethren," we are not put in the place of the first

Adam, but in the place of Christ, the Last Adam, where we live and abide by His power and might.

Thus Heb. 12:1-2 says, "... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." Jesus Christ fought the battle against sin, the flesh, and the devil. He won as Man and proved the possibility of our victory through Him. If we abide in Him in faith, our faith and our lives can withstand every test and temptation.

Yet we are responsible to make ourselves externally what God makes us internally. God can put a believer into a right relationship with himself, but He cannot make him work out that relationship. The believer must do that himself. I John 3:2 states: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . ."; but having been made the sons of God does not absolve us from the lifelong task of actually making ourselves sons of God. God alters our dispositions, but we must mold our characters after His will.

When God alters the disposition, the new disposition will stir us to think along His line. As we begin to think, we begin to work out externally what God has worked internally, and it becomes character. "For as he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Prov. 23:7). Hence character is consolidated thought. God will make us pure in heart, but we must see to it that our conduct is pure.

The proof that we are baptized with the Holy Spirit is that we bear a strong family likeness to the Lord Jesus. Thus men may take knowledge of us, as they did at Pentecost, that we have been with Jesus, abiding in faith. The peculiar aspect of such faith is that it is faith in Christ which relates us to himself and commits us to His point of view.

However it is not faith in a point of view divorced from relationship to the person of Jesus. Our Lord teaches, not primarily by principles, but by personal relationship to himself. When we become rightly related to Him personally through His complete redemption, our hearts are unshakably confident in Him. True justification can only result in sanctification. By justification God anticipates that we are holy in HIS sight. And if we obey the Holy Spirit, we will verify in actual life that God is justified in justifying us.

Thus faith means that we commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus, projecting ourselves, as it were, onto Him, dying to self and living to Him. Faith is implicit confidence in Jesus and in His faith. Not only must our faith abide in Him, but also in everything for which He has faith. When we abide in faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we also abide in the faith that was in Christ -- the faith that governed His life -- the faith which Satan could not break.

In Gal. 2:20, the Apostle Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" and the life which I now live in the flesh I live

by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." In other words, when we abide in faith, the faith that characterized Christ characterizes us, for abiding in Him we become identified with His faith.

Therefore there can be no end to the life of faith. As we must abide in faith following justification, so must we abide even after sanctification. The life of Jesus from Bethlehem onward is a picture of the sanctified life. Christ always did the will of the Father, and He abode unified with the Father in faith. Even through the ordeal of Calvary, Jesus remained steadfast, committing himself unto the Father. So it must be with us; we are continually responsible to learn the lessons of God, and we are to shun anything which would stagnate our souls and produce a distortion of this fact. No matter how much grace we profess, we must ever abide in faith, identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. However, if we thus abide in faith, we must also abide in obedience.

B. Abiding In Obedience

Mountain peaks of faith are either substantiated by obedience or nullified by disobedience. Thus, to maintain a climate of faith, we must fulfill the condition of obedience. Not only is obedience the basis of faith, but it is also the principle of righteousness in the sight of God. It is evident, then, that communion in abiding is not only dependent upon our faith life, but it is also vitally controlled by our choice life -- the decisions we make. As abiding in faith particularly involved our mental and moral assent to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the aspect of abiding in obedience specifically requires a willful consent to the fulfillment of the gospel of redemption in our lives.

Actually, faith and obedience cannot be separated; they are interdependent. Faith springs from obedience, but we also obey because we have faith. In other words, we could not have faith in God if we did not obey Him, and we would not feel obligated to continue to obey unless we had faith in what He required of us. Thus, from an intellectual viewpoint, it may seem at times that our Christian lives are led by obedience, while at other times they seem inspired by faith.

In reality, aside from the emotional aspect, our relationship with God in Christ may be characterized as that of an unending cycle containing assent and consent, which alternately dominate according to circumstance. We should recognize that there are times when abiding in communion requires mental and moral assent in a particular respect, resting in the knowledge "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Again, we ought to understand that abiding in unity with the Father and the Son demands a willful consent to do the divine will as it is made known unto us. Jas. 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Although we have thus far considered abiding in obedience in a rather abstract manner, our union with Christ is not just a thing of the intellect or sentiment, but it is a real, vital union in heart and life. The holy life of Christ, with His attitudes, feelings, and disposition, is breathed into us by His Spirit. Thus the believer's calling is to think and feel and will just what the Lord thought, felt, and willed. We should desire to be not only partakers of the grace, but also to be partakers of the holy obedience of our Lord. To live the life of Christ means that we must be delivered from the life of self, and the will of the Lord Jesus is the only path of liberty from the slavery of our own self-will.

Consider the words of Jesus Christ with regard to our abiding in obedience:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:15, 21, 23).

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

Such scriptures indicate what is to be the abiding attitude of the believer: obeying the commandments of One whom we can believe only by will, and whose gifts we can receive only by will. The effort on our part is to maintain the childlike relation to God, receiving from Him all the time, responding to His love and to His will with our love and our wills. When a man is rightly related to God by abiding, it is the Holy Spirit of Christ who works through him.

As long as a Christian maintains the will or consent to believe, the desire to receive and the will to obey, the life of Jesus is manifested in his whole being. There could be no fellowship with Him without obedience to His will. His commands are the revelation of divine love which guides us into deeper experience with divine life, and they open the path to a closer communion with the Lord. Thus the commands of God ought to be as precious to the believer as His promises.

Whenever we accept the will of God as the Holy Spirit and Scripture reveal it, the commands of God become the means of conformity to Him. Keeping His commandments is the way to abide in His love, for every manifestation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is entirely dependent on our oneness with God. In the life which Jesus Christ lived on earth, obedience to the Father was a solemn reality.

The dark power that led man to disobey and revolt from his God came upon Jesus too. He was tempted by the offers of disobedience to fulfill self-gratification, and they were serious to the extent that He fasted and prayed to refuse them. Thus our Lord spoke very distinctly of not seeking to do His own will as a surrender He

had to continually make. But He made the keeping of the Father's commandments the supreme object of His life, and so abode in His love. (Cf. John 5:30; 15:10.)⁵

Hence Christ points us to the only path that leads to the blessedness of communion and fellowship in life now; it is by obedience in the love of heaven. When His Spirit flows in us as the branches of His Vine, this abiding in obedience is one of the surest and highest elements of the life He inspires. If we would abide in Christ, if we would commune with Him, we must be careful to keep His commandments. We must keep them in love, written on the fleshly tables of our hearts.

Moreover, let us understand that obedience is progressive, even as faith is progressive "from faith to faith." No matter how long we have been Christians, there still remains much of the Lord's will that we do not yet understand or know. We must not imagine that entire consecration is the ultimate end of our obedience unto a holy life in Christ Jesus -- rather, it is only the beginning.

In Rom. 12:1, Paul indicates the progression of abiding in obedience by first teaching believers to lay themselves upon the altar as whole and holy burnt offerings unto God, and then he proceeds in verse 2 to declare what the true altar-life is. It is being ever more and more renewed in our minds to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." This progressive renewal of the Holy Spirit leads us to growing likemindedness to Christ. There then arises a delicate power of spiritual perception -- a holy instinct -- by which we may be quick of understanding to recognize the meaning and the application of the Lord's commands to our daily walk.

If we are to abide in obedience, we must be careful of disobedience even in little things. We must shun anything that is not in perfect harmony with the will of God. We must walk in the light we have received as His children, unreservedly yielding ourselves to obey all that the Lord has revealed unto us. Disobedience dulls the conscience, darkens the soul, and deadens our spiritual energies; therefore we must keep the commandments of Christ with implicit obedience.

Each new surrender to keep His commandments, each new sacrifice, leads us to deeper union with the will, the Spirit, and the love of the Saviour. Thus a double recompense of reward shall be ours if we abide in obedience -- a fuller conformity of Christ's blessed life, and a fuller entrance into the mystery of His love. It is the presence of the very love of God in our hearts that enables us to obey, and we find it easy to obey when we so abide.

In I John 2:6, we read: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The believer is to walk as the Lord Jesus walked. When he is sanctified unto the obedience of Christ, he obeys on the same principles as those on which Jesus obeyed. It is thus the obedience of a life to which it is natural and delightful to do the will of the Father. A child submits to the will of the parent,

but Jesus Christ obeyed in a better way. He came to do the will of God, and obedience was His mode and the law of His being.

This great inward principle, the divine nature operating within, is to function likewise in the believer, motivating and characterizing his life. Only those who abide as branches in the Vine, only those who possess that new nature can understand this principle of obedience. All who are destitute of a spiritual birth, a spiritual grafting into the life of the Lord Jesus, are outside of and ignorant of this realm of fellowship. It is a life of communion, a common life -- common to Christ and common to the believer.

Therefore Jesus Christ identifies obedience with faith, and in the Acts of the Apostles obedience is made the condition of receiving and retaining His Spirit. "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). Again, as I John 2:6 asserts, so this passage likewise declares that abiding fullness depends completely upon our obedience to the ever-widening circle of the illumination of God's will for our lives.

It is thus evident that the Spirit-filled must be the Spirit-ruled. And if we are to continuously enjoy the close communion of the Spirit of Christ, He must have a constant monopoly on every aspect of our lives. The children of light walk in the light; and in obedience to the light, there is conscious fellowship with the God of life, light, and love, "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

Moreover, as our faith is identified by our obedience, so is our obedience identified by the free response of our love to the infinite love of God. We previously noted that the process of abiding with Christ begins in faith and ends in love. When we are confronted with the commands of God we ought to comply, but our communion depends upon more than just bare compliance to the will of God. Obedience that is grudgingly or only dutifully rendered is impotent. Such tainted obedience will not be recognized by God as a basis of abiding in communion.

In John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; and in other passages, love is seen to be the desired condition of obedience. If we love, we will gladly obey; if we thus obey, we manifest our love to God. The contact of the response of our love with His love becomes the bond of fellowship. Therefore we consider the third aspect of abiding in communion with Christ, the element of abiding in love.

C. Abiding In Love

In John 15:9 we read the following words of Jesus: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." Love originates in the Father. God is Love; love is His very being. It is more than an attribute; love is the very essence of His nature, the core around which all His attributes function. It was because He was Love that God was the Father, and that there was a Son. Love anticipates an

object to whom it can give itself, in whom it can lose itself, and with whom it can make itself one.

The love of the Father to the Son is that divine passion and affiliation with which He delights in the Son, and speaks; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The divine love is as a brilliant light. In all its brightness, its intensity and infinity, it has but one object and joy; that is the only begotten Son.

When we gather together all the attributes of God we find that we fall short in forming an accurate conception of what the love of God really is. God's infinity, His perfection, His immensity, His majesty, His omnipotence are all rays of the glory of His love. We can comprehend only one basic truth: the love of God surpasses human understanding. God not only loves the Son, but He has directed His love toward humanity, even when we are yet sinners.

In I John 3:1, 16, we read: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us . . ." We must understand that "God so loved the world, that he gave . . ." Also we must make the connection of how God loved the Son and how the Son loved the Father, before we can realize how God loves us and how we must love Him.

This love of God to His Son, and the fact that He spared not His Son, may be instrumental to help us understand how He loves us. He loved us while we were yet sinners, but we also become the object of His delight when we apply to the sacrifice of His Son for forgiveness and cleansing. God gave the Son, and the Son gave himself, that the power of sin might be broken, that we might be restored into the fellowship of their love.

Our Saviour so loved us that His life became unalterably bound up in our lives. We are to respond by binding our lives to His life, and so abide in His love. Christ made our salvation His indispensable purpose, and if we are to abide in His love we must make His glory the indispensable purpose of our lives. His love for us is an eternal love; it is without beginning or end. If we abide in love, although our love for Him must have a beginning, it need never end.

Again, His love for us is a perfect love; it gives all, and it holds nothing back - all He has is ours. We must likewise return a perfect love -- perfect within the scope of our human limitations. Ours too can be a perfect love that gives all there is of us to the Lord Jesus, and that holds nothing back. Just as He offers His love to be our daily habitation, our lives are to be His holy temple every day.

Thus the love of Jesus Christ for us not only becomes the motive for our response of love, but it is also the measure of our surrender. It isn't that His love begrudges us any worthy thing; but unless we submit our all to Him, love cannot

get possession of us to fill us. Our surrender to His love must measure to the surrender of His love for us.

However, we can always abide in His love, for love itself supplies the means to so abide in Him. As long as we have faith in His divine love, and as long as we respond to that love, we shall be enabled to abide in His love. The kind of faith that is needful is that faith by which utter sinfulness casts itself into the arms of Christ's love to be saved, and that faith which rests completely in Jesus to be kept and made strong.

Our Lord teaches us, just as He taught His disciples, that to abide in Him was to abide in His love. As an example and rule for our abiding in His love, we must look to His abiding in the Father's love. Thus, in the light of His union with the Father, our union with Him will become clear. His life in the Father is the pattern of our life in Him, and it is to be the law of our abiding.

In John 6:57 we read: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Again, in His high priestly prayer, Christ distinctly prays "that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me . . .," (John 17:22-23). Hence the blessed union of Christ with the Father and His life in Him is to be the only rule of our thoughts and expectations with regard to our living and abiding in Him.

This union of Jesus Christ and the Father was the root of His abiding in the Father. Even while dwelling here on earth, Jesus knew that He was one with the Father. He knew that the Father's life was in Him, and that His love surrounded Him. Without this knowledge, abiding in the Father and His love would have been impossible. Thus it is only in this manner that we can abide in Christ and His love. We must recognize that we are one with Him -- one in unity of nature.

By His birth Jesus Christ became a man, and He took our human nature that He might be one with us. By our spiritual new birth we become one with Him; we are made partakers of the divine nature. The cord that binds us to Christ is as real and close as that which bound Him to the Father -- it is the cord of the divine life. Our claim on the Lord Jesus is as sure and always availing as was His claim on the Father, for our union with Him is to be as close.⁶

Not only is this the union of divine life, but it is one of infinite love. In Christ's life and humiliation here on earth He tasted the blessedness and strength of knowing himself to be the Object of the infinite love of His Father, and He dwelt in that love all of the time. From this example we are to learn the joyous secret of constantly abiding in Him in love. If we are one with the Lord in spiritual new birth, we are to yield ourselves completely to Him to be loved of Him. When we thus recline in His love and realize its surrounding power, we find the reality of abiding in love.

Although we have considered the mode of abiding in love, which includes abiding in faith and obedience, let us here clearly recognize that in the life of divine love the emptying of self and the sacrificing of our wills are the surest way to have all that we can wish or will. Dependence, subjection, and self-sacrifice are for the Christian, as they were for Jesus Christ, the blessed path of life.

As our Lord lived through and in the Father, even so the believer must live in and through Christ. We must be willing to trust ourselves and our interests to His love, giving up all care for our own wills and honor. We must make His glory our glory to exercise and lean absolutely on Him in all things. We must be content to have no life apart from Him; only then will He do for us what the Father did for Him.

Thus, if we will so abide in His love, He will lay of His glory on us; as the name of our Lord Jesus is glorified in us, we are glorified in Him (cf. II Thess. 1:12). Because of such fellowship and unity, He acknowledges us as His true and worthy representatives. Hence He entrusts us with His power; He admits us to His counsels, as He allows our intercession to influence His rule of His Church and the world.

Moreover, He makes us the vehicles of His authority and His influence over men. His Spirit abides with us as we abide in Him, becoming instruments for His divine work. Again, let us remind ourselves that such communion and abiding in love are the result of the spontaneous outflowing of life from within, both on Christ's part and our part, coupled with the mighty inworking of the love from above.

Therefore, as Christ was the Revelation of the Father on earth, so are we to be the revelation of Christ on earth. Jesus could not have revealed the Father except that He had perfect unity with the Father, and except there was a complete communication of all the Father had to Him as the Son. Jesus Christ, then, was the Revelation of the Father because the Father loved Him, and He abode in that love.

Likewise, we cannot be the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ unless we have perfect unity with Him. The world must know that He loves us as believers and that He has sent us forth to reveal His love to them. We reveal Christ as long as we abide in His love. It has given itself and all that it has to us, and we abide in that love by in turn giving ourselves and the love we have received unto the world.

Abiding in love, in communion with Christ, we are to prove to men that He loves them. And, in loving, He wants to fill them with a love that is not of this world, By living and by loving as Jesus did, we are to be perpetual witnesses to the love that gives itself. Our Lord gives a specific commandment regarding our love. In John 15:12 we read: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Love is to be the one convincing and indisputable token of our discipleship. Note this message in I John 4:12, 16-17:

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world."

Hence, to the believer seeking perfect fellowship with Christ, the keeping of His commandment is at once seen to be the blessed proof that he is abiding in Him. Love remains the path to a fuller and more perfect union. The love of Christ's followers to each other occupies a central position between their love to God and to all men. It is the test of our love to God, whom we cannot see. In our associations with God's children, love to God is called into exercise, and manifests itself in deeds that the Father accepts as done to himself.

The love to the brethren is the fruit of the root of love to God, although it is unseen in the heart. This fruit again becomes the seed of love to all men. The intercourse of believers with one another is the school in which we are strengthened and trained to love our fellow men who are yet out of Christ. This love is to exceed the liking that rests on points of agreement, but it is to be a holy love that takes hold of the unworthiest, bearing with the most disagreeable for Jesus' sake.

Before we despond concerning the seeming impossibility of loving thus, let us note that the Lord gave this commandment of love in close connection with His teaching about the vine and the branches. We have only to abide in Him to be able to love like Him. We are to regard abiding in Christ as ultimately abiding in His love, being rooted and grounded daily in a love that passeth knowledge, receiving of its fullness as we learn to love.

With Christ also abiding in us, the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. We are able to love the brethren, even the most trying and unlovable, with a love that is not our own. It is the love of Christ in us. Thus, abiding in communion, abiding in love, not only includes a love relationship with our Lord and the brethren, but it takes in a love and a concern for the sinner away from Christ.

Abiding in communion with Christ is certainly no hardship, no matter the self-sacrifice it demands. Our surrender to Him to fully abide in Him, and He in us, is a joyous experience. In John 15:11, He says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might abide in you, and that your joy might be full." It is our redemptive privilege that we may share the life, the love, and the joy of such close association with the Lord. As we abide in Him, He abides in us, and the communion we have in abiding is an exchange of our lives, our wills, our affections, for His life, His will, and His love.

This involves continued communication on our part as well as Christ's part. When we so abide, all things are common between us and Christ, and there is continuous knowledge of His will. There is also constant assurance that He has our good in mind. Likewise He is aware of our faith, our obedience, and the response of our love. Hence communion with Christ, abiding in Him, is the active realization of participating and sharing. It is His transmission of life and love, and it is our giving of self and service.

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08 -- COMMUNION AND COMMUNICATION

Fellowship anticipates participators and apprehends united attention on a given subject. It confirms the transmission of ideas, the transfusion of vitality, and the reciprocal activity of giving and receiving. Fellowship must involve two or more personalities, as in the case of the Father with the Son, or the Son with the believer, and believer with believer.

Communion with Christ would be meaningless without the reality of communication. This connection makes it possible for Christ to reveal His redemption unto us, to convey His will, His love, and His life to us. Also we thereby find it possible to respond. The communion enjoyed in abiding is thus vitalized by the actuality and potentiality of continuous communication.

Our whole Christian life relies upon the clear consciousness of our relationship to Christ. The ability of God to make His love, His will, and His life known unto us, along with our ability to know, is what gives reality and meaning to daily Christian experience. In other words, without the possibility of continuous contact with our Lord, communion with Him would also be impossible. The idea of communication is to keep in touch, to maintain mental and moral affinity, to retain a relationship of love, and to literally stay alive unto God.

Thus we find that not only is communion dependent upon communication, but that communication is the means of communion. Communication is the unified reciprocal act of giving and receiving. It is our receiving the gift of God's love, and the giving of our loving worship in return; it is our receiving of the life of Christ, and the giving of our lives in Christian service; it is our admission of need, and the acceptance of God's help.

However, as communication is the means to communion, prayer, meditation on the Word of God, and abiding in the will of God are the main channels of communication. The Holy Spirit of Christ is the communicant that bears witness with our spirits that our connection with Christ is clear. Only then does prayer avail, only then is truth revealed, and only then is obedience blessed.

Note the words of Jesus as recorded in John 15:7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Prayer is thus both one of the means and one of the fruits of union to Christ. It is of unspeakable importance as a means. All the actings of faith, all the pleadings of desire, all the confessions of shortcoming, all the yearnings after a fuller surrender, and all the exercises in which the soul gives up self and clings to and abides in Christ, find their utterance in prayer.

Yet it is because of the believer's spiritual unity with Christ that his prayer is accepted and heard. Our union with the Son of God is to be a life union -- that we are in very deed one with Him; hence our prayer ascends as His prayer also. It is because we abide in Him that we can ask what we will and it is given to us.

Communion, then, is the union that is wrought by communication; and when we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, we are taught to pray in accordance with the will of God. As we abide in Christ, our self-will is purged, the thoughts and wishes of nature are brought into captivity to the thoughts and wishes of Christ, and like-mindedness to Him grows upon us as our working and willing become transformed into harmony with His.

Moreover, when we abide in Christ, everything is yielded to the power of His life in us, that it may exercise its sanctifying influence in us even on ordinary wishes and desires. His Holy Spirit thus breathes through the whole being, communicating His will, and this inspires our wills to be in conformity to the divine will. His communication thus renews and sanctifies our wills. Hence we may ask what we will (under the dominion of Christ) and it is given to us. Such abiding in the communion of Christ teaches the believer to seek only the glory of God in prayer. In John 14:13 we see that, in promising to answer prayer, Christ's one thought is his: "that the Father might be glorified in the Son."

Having communion with Christ, the believer learns not only to desire, but to spiritually discern, what will be for God's glory. Thus the primary condition of acceptable prayer is fulfilled when, as the fruit of its union with Christ, the whole mind of the believer is brought into harmony with that of the Son, as He said, "Father, glorify thy name" (John 12:28). It is only when we abide in Christ in the union of communication that we can fully avail ourselves of the name of Jesus Christ and the resources that are thereto attached. The promise, "Whatsoever ye ask in my name" (John 14:13), cannot be severed from the command, "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

By communing with Christ, associating ourselves with Him, and remaining at this point of communication, we gain the right and power to use His name in confidence. The Father withholds nothing from the Son. Abiding in communion with Christ, we come to the Father as one with Him. The righteousness of Christ comes to reside in every believer, and when His Spirit is in us, the Father sees the Son, and gives us our petition.

Thus, as we live in communion with Christ, our prayers will touch God, and they will have the power to prevail. When we so abide in Christ, our wills are not only renewed to pray aright, but the full power of His merits is secured to our resources. When we so abide in union with Christ, faith results that alone can obtain the answer to prayer. Hence Jesus in Matt. 9:29 says, "According to your faith be it unto you." Again, we read, in Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Such faith to receive rests upon, and is rooted in, the Word; and as a spiritual act, it depends upon the words of the Lord abiding in us as living power. Moreover, as we abide in Christ and grow in the consciousness of our union with Him, we see that it is He who makes both us and our petitions acceptable. We thus dare to claim an answer because we have received communication from Him, and we know we are one with Him.

Let us note that all spiritual blessings must be received, that is, accepted or taken by us in faith. Andrew Murray states that the Greek words for "receiving" and "taking" are the same. When Jesus said, "Every one that asketh receiveth," He used the same verb as at the supper, "Take, eat," or on the Resurrection morning, "Receive" (accept, take) the Holy Spirit. Therefore, receiving not only implies God's bestowment, but it also presupposes our acceptance.¹

Accordingly, we know that Jesus Christ desires to have communion with us because of the communication of His Holy Spirit, poured into our accepting hearts. On the strength of God's Word, we know that He not only wants to have us filled with His Spirit, but He delights to give us His Spirit. When we realize this, we can believe in thanksgiving and prayer, and open our hearts for the Spirit to come and take full and undisturbed possession. It is such prayer that not only asks and hopes, but also takes and holds, that inherits the full blessing of communion.

Hence we have true communion with Christ when we receive the communication of His Spirit. This was in the mind of Jesus when He said:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 14:16, 26; 15: 26-27.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14.

These scriptures confirm the actuality of our being united to God in Christ, and His Spirit is to be the living bond of union between God and us. (John 17:23 states: "I in them, and thou in me . . .") Moreover, we see that the living bond is established when we receive the Comforter, "the Spirit of truth." Thus, close communion is possible because unifying communication has been accomplished.

In Jesus Christ we behold the Father as united to us, and ourselves as united to the Father. However Christ must have been revealed to us, not only through the truth grasped by the mind, but by the communication of "the Spirit of truth" in the deepest recesses of our personal consciousness. Without the Spirit of God dwelling in us, we would not be able to receive the extent of His resources.

Furthermore, the only Interpreter of the Holy Scriptures is the Holy Spirit, and unless we have Him to be our Interpreter we are not able to enter into the Word of God and have close communion as we ought. It is the Spirit who communicates the Word, who explains it, and we need His enlightenment to understand the Word. Also we need to have His radiance in us so we may discern the things around us as they really are.

Not only does the Spirit enable us to receive the things of Christ, but He enables us to see and to understand their meaning and application to us. The Holy Spirit makes the truth, the love, and the life of Christ fresh and living realities to us. In this manner the redemption of Jesus Christ is made a present, divine, and efficacious reality. Because Christ's redemption is made real unto us, the continuous communication of His Word, His love, and His life are constant realms of communion.

However, communication of the Spirit is the means not only of revelation and interpretation, but also of impartation. It is also the ministry of the Holy Spirit to work in us a holy work by imparting unto us the virtue of the life of Christ, His forgiveness, His love, His purity, and His humility. Only as our connection, our unity with Christ is maintained by the Spirit do our lives receive the vitality of our Lord's life, and is His life glorified by our lives. Such an impartation of life and such a relationship are justified only when the Spirit bears witness with our confessing spirits that our sins are forgiven.

Our communication is complete as we receive His love in a loving response by loving God with our whole hearts, and by loving our neighbors as ourselves. Then, through the impartation of the Holy Spirit, in His pruning, purging, cleansing power, our beings are purified and prepared to hold close communion with Christ, and to bear much fruit. Before this transaction can be brought into fruition, however, the Spirit must transplant the humility of the Lord Jesus into our hearts, casting down the reign of pride and self-centeredness.

For this purpose God hath shined in our hearts: to make known through us the knowledge of His glory in the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the whole purpose of communion and communication is that Christ shall be made manifest, not just in heaven after-while, but here and now in our mortal flesh. Thus we become living epistles, known and read of all men -- living revelations, human examples of the divine nature.

This is apparently what the Apostle Paul means when he says, "We all with open face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). That is to say, the character of the Lord replaces the self-glorification of the individual. For in reflecting the character of the Lord we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, from character to character, by the Spirit of Christ. Unity is achieved, communication is established, and communion takes the place of discord. The nature of sin has been cast out to make place for the harmonious nature of Christ.

Here, then, is the place where truth is revealed and applied to our hearts; it is where life is secured and where prayers are answered. It is a place where the power of sin is broken. In I John 3:5-6, we read:

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

The connection of this scripture clearly shows that the taking away of sin has reference not only to our atonement and freedom from guilt, but to deliverance from the power of sin, so that the believer is separated from sin. It is Christ's personal holiness that constitutes His power to effect this purpose in our lives, and it opens the way to our communion with Him. When He admits sinners into life union with himself, the result is that their lives become like His. As long as we abide here, sin does not hinder nor break our communion with Him. Our holiness of heart and life has its roots in the personal holiness of our Lord, and, "if the root be holy, so are the branches."

Hence, we are delivered from the power of the carnal mind, and our abiding in Christ becomes close and unbroken, so that we live from moment to moment in vital contact with the Lord, our Keeper. The divine promise of communion given to faith is: "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14). But with the promise is the command: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12). The believer who claims the promise in full faith has the power to obey the command, crucifying the old nature of sin.

Thus, when the believer seeks a permanent abode in the Lord Jesus, communion with the sinless life of Christ keeps him from actual transgression. By the communication of faith the believer entrusts himself to the keeping and to the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. As he surrenders his life to Christ, the Lord gives unto him His life; and, as the believer abides in Christ, he relies on Christ to abide in

him. This union and fellowship of communion is the secret of a holy life, and it is accomplished by the communication of the grace of our Lord.

On the other hand, our participation in the religious sacrament of the Lord's Supper may also be considered as an accompanying means of achieving communion. It is to be in conjunction with prayerful examination and meditation that involve the deep attitudes of the heart. Hence the sacrament is a physical assistance preparing our spiritual disposition to effectively discern as to what the passion of our Lord really means to us.

In a sense the communion expressed in partaking of the material elements of the bread and the cup is apart from the communication of the Spirit of God. To an extent it represents the physical communion Christ's disciples had with Him at the Last Supper. Although it may seem remote, the idea of physical identification with Christ contains mysterious importance to us. There is even undeniable merit in our physical remembrance and association with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Somehow, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the special presence of our living Lord is made known unto us. Just as Christ made himself known to His friends in the breaking of bread during the forty days after His resurrection -- at a common meal, on the seashore after a hard night of fruitless fishing, and in the midst of daffy life and the attempts to worship -- so all through the succeeding centuries has He made himself known to His people. We do not know how Christ is present in a special way in the sacrament of His supper, but we do know that it is the unified testimony of His Church and His people that He is there.²

By our faithful observance of His words, we receive particular sustenance and communion at this table that would otherwise be missed. Yet we must still remember, a spiritually prepared heart is of prime necessity before we can grasp how the Lord suffered for us; and not only that He suffered for us, but that He is our living, glorified, and risen Lord. The whole Eucharist is illumined by the radiance of His resurrection and the promise of His coming again.

However in such sacramental worship, as in every other part of our spiritual life, we have to walk by faith and not by sight. Here too, as in the life of prayer as a whole, we must walk steadily along the safe path of an obscure faith. We can have faith to approach Christ in this manner because He has desired us to do so, and His communicating Spirit draws us to Him. Christ wants to make himself real to us in every possible sense because He loves us. By our very observance of His supper we open another avenue of fellowship. The commemoration of the new covenant of His blood speaks louder than words, telling us that, as we associate ourselves with Him in life and in spirit, He is our Companion forevermore.

Thus in such communion, He comes to assure us that He is our Friend and Saviour, who will never leave us nor forsake us. This reassurance strengthens us. Although we may feel human weakness more acutely than ever, He does make us

strong to work, to endure, to love, and hope, and pray, and give. With His presence in trust, Christ makes us strong enough to be single-minded, unselfish, generous to others, and trustful towards God. Moreover, this vital contact with the Lord makes us strong to go on working without looking for any praise or appreciation from others, but simply that we may please Him.

Therefore the dynamic force in the mystery of communion is consecration. Even in our sacramental worship of Christ the reality of His presence is dependent upon our entire surrender, submission in docility and confidence. Every means of communicating himself unto us is to make us more and more like himself. Hence, if we do not shrink from His transforming and quickening action, Christ will perfect His creative and redeeming work in us, shaping us according to His will. Our constant prayer at every meeting with the Lord should be, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

In a sense it is God who consecrates, yet we must bring our offering of an obedient love for Him to bless and use. As we yield ourselves in His hands, He will accomplish His will in us by the communication of His grace. Thus even the sacramental Communion, as it unifies and communicates the physical events of the passion of our Lord, is ultimately of necessity expanded to include every realm of human activity as it relates to Jesus Christ.

When by the act of Communion we manifest our utter dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, our trust is verified by the consciousness of His love and mercy that enfolds us all. Yet the Presence we feel, the communication we receive, the unity we share, and the fellowship we hold are not only to be taken in, but also to be given out.

Our association with the Lord is for the express purpose of glorifying Him -- of nourishing others by the manifestation of Him in us. There is, then, this further expression of our communion with Christ in what might be called "sacramental service." This is the eventual manner in which our response to Jesus Christ must take form and crystallize into lives of beauty and harmony with Him.

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09 -- THE SACRAMENTAL EXPRESSION OF SERVICE

To sacrifice self and self-interest for the profit of others is to effectually shew forth the Lord's death till He come. Only then do we exhibit the great principle which animated His death. Only then is the full purpose of communion with Christ realized. In this regard the word "sacramental" must be understood to mean the real presence of Christ being conveyed unto others through the elements of speech and every facet of the whole life of the Christian.

Thus our Lord declares, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). That is, we are to confess with every part of us that Christ has come in the flesh -- not only historically as an individual, but that He has taken His residence in our flesh. Therefore every activity of our lives should testify of Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him as He abides within the frame of our flesh. The Scripture states, in I John 4:2, 4, to this effect:

"Hereby know ye the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

The expression of our service and our confession concerning Christ is the expected result of community with Christ. There is vitality in His communication with us, and there is untold value in our communication with Him. Yet these are not ends in themselves alone. The desired end of our fellowship with Christ is the salvation of others; and only through the sacramental expression of our service, as Christ works through us, is this complete goal accomplished.

It is only when we break clear of ourselves and our own self-consciousness, to give ourselves completely over to the Lord Jesus, that He can use us as a sacrament to nourish other lives. However, even this is not to be a point of self-glorification. Thus the Apostle Paul writes, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

If we have been brought into a right relationship with God by the redemption of Jesus Christ, He expects us to put on His yoke and to learn of Him. Jesus let the Father do His whole will in and through Him without asking His permission or without His giving argument. It is by the cross of Christ that we are saved; and by the cross of Christ we are sanctified wholly.

So we cannot be sacramental disciples until we deliberately lay ourselves on the altar of the Cross. Here we are to give ourselves over decisively and completely to actually become what we are potentially in the sight of God -- unified members of the body of Christ. Thus our devotional lives as Christians should lead us to identify ourselves with God's interests, and His interests are in other lives also. He pays little heed to our personal affinities; He expects us to identify ourselves with His interests in others. It is only through this identification that we are able to give sacramental service to a lost and dying world.

Moreover, our expression of sacramental service is to be more than a self-conscious striving, but rather as unconscious instruments in the hands of God. If one is conscious of being used as "broken bread" and "poured-out wine," he becomes interested in his own martyrdom, for a conscious cost is involved. There is then the likelihood that the self will argue with the will of God.

On the other hand, when one lays himself on the altar of the Cross, all consciousness of self disappears, and all consciousness of what he is doing for God or of what God is doing through him disappears also. All excellence of self loses distinguishment in relation to the radiant brilliance of the excellency of Christ. There should be no place for any feeling of self-satisfaction on our part with regard to religious experience. Rather, there should be a concern that brings us to an understanding of what is meant by our Lord's words, "Ye shall be my witnesses."

With such a concept in mind and in heart, wherever a Christian goes, everything he does becomes a sacrament in God's hands, unconsciously to himself. Thus a Christian is to be more concerned with God-consciousness than being consciously used of God. It is enough to know that we are in the will of God. We are to maintain an attitude of childlike faith towards God, so that He will do what He likes with us.

When we become taken up into His consciousness, we are fully His, and the life of service for Him becomes the natural dependent life of a child upon his parent. It is a life of total obedience that never tries to anticipate what or how God is going to use him. God inevitably avoids the conscious display of servitude, but He uses the casual, unassuming thing that has not been tainted by the influence of self-will. Again, let us remember that such a relationship is the ultimate unifying result of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus the only possibility of our expression of sacramental service is for us to endure a death to self. In John 12:24, this truth is declared as Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is readily discerned that no amount of self-centered service can accomplish the purpose of God.

As Jesus had to abandon all private sentiments, so must we reckon ourselves dead without the free, invigorating presence of Christ operating in us and through us. Christ cannot produce fruit through us so long as self interferes. The more closely we become involved with Christ, the less we reckon ourselves of any account, and the more we become of the nature of a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying in order that it may bring forth fruit.

Moreover, our success in sacramental service is dependent upon how well Christ is reproduced in us for the feeding of a spiritually starved world. A diet of self is insufficient to meet the nutritional demands of the spiritually impoverished. Life can be brought to the sin-sick world only as we give them Christ -- Christ in us. Therefore, 'he must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3:30).

These retiring words of John the Baptist are very appropriate for a Christian to live if he is interested in seeing the kingdom of God advance. We decrease only as Christ increases in us, and He increases in us only as we nourish His life by that

which decreases us. In other words, we must be willing to feed the life of the Son of God in us; to not only give Him place in us, but to provide the material with which and through which He can work.¹

Again, we must recognize that such sacramental service to God is moved by the mainspring of love. This kind of service is the high type of service in which Jesus Christ gave himself on our behalf, in suffering and dying for the sins of the world. His cross has thus become the gateway into identification with His life. We must so love Christ that we are willing to enter into communion with Him at the Cross.

We do not enter into the life of God in Christ merely by imitation or sacramental vows, or by ceremonies, or by church membership. We enter into the life of God by its birth in us at our regeneration, and this new birth is functionally perfected at our sanctification. The progressive, crisis relationships we gain first when we confess and repent, and when we consecrate and receive the Spirit, are both experienced because of the Cross. It is therefore evident that the sacramental service of Christians also involves a cross.

However, the Cross is not the cross of man but the Cross of God, and the cross of God can never be realized in human experience. The cross of Christ is often wrongly taken as a type of the cross we are to carry. But Jesus did not say, "If any man will come after Me, let him take up My cross," but, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Our cross becomes our divinely appointed privilege by means of His cross, but we are never called upon to carry His cross. The cross of Jesus is the revelation of God's judgment on sin, and His means of providing salvation from sin by the substitution of Jesus, the Lamb, for sinful humanity. Thus the cross of Christ is a revelation; our cross is an experience.²

In order for our lives to bear sacramental service toward God, we must put to death the things within us that are not of God. Otherwise they will cause the things that are of God to perish. There is no alternative; something must die in us -- either sin or the life of God. Sin is a nature we are born with, and sins are acts for which we are responsible. Although we cannot remedy our condition alone, the redemption work of God in Christ releases us from the death sin brings.

Hence, whenever we agree with God's condemnation of sin, as He condemned it on the Cross, we may be delivered from sin. Sacramental service involves our going through the condemnation of sin in us, agreeing with God's verdict on the sin and lust in us, and experiencing the work of Christ's cross in our lives. If we will allow our own selves to be condemned, there is no more condemnation for us, and the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ is made actual in our hearts and lives. Thus our cross in sacramental service is the cross where self is crucified for the excellency of the will of Christ. Paul writes in this regard:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

It is only from the standpoint of sanctification and sacramental service that these verses apply. Unless our salvation works out through our hands, our feet, our mouths, and every other possible function of service, then our religion is vain. Hence our Lord says to those who have entered into His life by means of His cross, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." He does not just say, "Let him give up sin"; most men are more willing to give up sinning than self. But Jesus includes self: "Let him deny himself."

In other words, the key to sacramental service is found in our turning away from sin and in giving up our right to ourselves to Christ. This is the cross we hold before the world -- the fact that we are sanctified to do nothing but the will of God. We have submitted our right to ourselves forever, and the cross we freely take up is a sign in heaven, on earth, and to hell, that we are the Lord's and we are no longer our own. Anything else we might endeavor to give is valueless as an instrument of service. The Lord must have the full accord of self to His will.

Some are apt to think that the cross they have to carry as Christians means the ordinary troubles and trials of life, but these come whether we are Christians or not. Neither is our cross suffering for conscience' or convictions' sake. Our cross is something that comes only with the peculiar relationship of a disciple to Jesus Christ in sacramental service. It is the evidence in our lives that we have denied our right to ourselves.

Then we are able to say with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). It is not only that we give up our right to ourselves to Jesus Christ. We, in love, are to determinedly relate ourselves to Christ by communion with Him, so that we are moved only by the things that appeal to Him. Only then are we interested in doing things with which He is associated.

Thus, unless we are willing to give up the right to ourselves, unless we are willing to give up what we consider to be the good and legitimate things in favor of Christ, we have not comprehended who He is, nor have we understood His salvation plan. Moreover, if we cannot give up our best for Him, all our words concerning our love for Him are meaningless. For it is the essential nature of love even in the natural life to give its best.

When we consider our relationship with Christ, if we are united with Him in sacramental service, the holy character of heart love is demanded. There are too many people who will gladly take all God will give them for nothing, but they are too

stingy to give Him anything in return. This is especially true when a total love is sought by God. They thereby lose sight of the happy bond of love, and they miss communion with Christ the Lord.

The sacrifice of ourselves to Jesus Christ is a crisis act, but its unfolding is a progressive experience. Many unknown interests may arise in our lives, and our sacrifice to Him is a continuous, living one. An up-to-date experience involves up-to-date sacrifice, our ready consent to continually give up our right to ourselves to Christ. This is the kind of experience, the kind of life service that God desires, and it is the only way that spiritual reality is secured.

So long as we maintain a full surrender of our love to His, we are so united with the Lord that any thought of what it cost is not considered with regret. Rather, communion with Christ means more to life than any pleasure we might derive from selfish expression. Also, our fellowship with Him in bearing our cross in sacramental service, revealing the salvation of God through our experience, overshadows any selfish pretense of fruit bearing and service.

Yet we must remember that we cannot be saved by mere consecration, or by praying, or by giving ourselves up to God. We can be saved only by the cross of Jesus Christ and the merits of His perfect sacrifice. Salvation is the unmerited, free gift of God to lost and dying humanity. We cannot experience what Christ experienced in opening the way of salvation; that is revelation. But we can experience the salvation that was wrought on the Cross. Unless it is somehow squelched, such an experience will materialize into sacramental service, and we will endeavor to be instruments to point others into the way of salvation. As II Cor. 5:14 states, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."

In other words, Jesus Christ was concerned about the lost estate of mankind, and He was moved by love and compassion to die a death that would provide a means of salvation for all. The sacramental Christian is also concerned and moved with love to die a death that would enable Christ to be revealed to a lost and dying world through him.

This opens the way for a continuous and faithful testimony in the flesh that "Christ died for us," and, insofar as the servant is consistent, he demonstrates the power of God to keep as well as "the power of God unto salvation." Therefore God has no place in His kingdom for an unfaithful servant, an unprofitable servant. The reward goes to the sacramental servant who cared for the work of his Lord.

Again, in Acts 20:24, we read the words of Paul, saying: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." As the apostle, every Christian ought to be

indifferent to any other consideration than that of fulfilling the ministry he has received.

Everyone who has received of the grace of God should thus be a sacramental servant. That is, our main occupation should be to serve Christ. In so doing we will be not only His servants before sinners, but also His servants to sinners. We have nothing to do with God's purpose, but only with the sacrament of God in us His presence flowing through the common elements of our lives. Hence Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

However, the measure of our service to God is not in our usefulness to others. We have nothing to do with the estimate of others, complying with their evident needs, nor even with success in service. Our great concern is to see that we fulfill the ministry to which we were called of God. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

These words of Jesus indicate an unquestioning loyalty to the commission of the Father, and in turn suggest a similar commission to all who would follow Him. It is evident that our Lord's first obedience was not to the needs of men, not to the consideration of where He would be the most useful, but to the will of the Father. Likewise the first requisite of sacramental service is not that our own lives be useful to God, but that we do God's will.

Therefore the great concern of the sacramental servant is to know the will of God, and then to do it. If we will live according to Rom. 12:1-2, we will find a ready answer. By being renewed in the spirit of the mind and refusing to be conformed to this age, we shall discern the will of God. Then we shall know that which is good and acceptable and perfect in the sight of God.

Hence the role of a sacramental servant is a consuming one. He is completely taken up with finding and doing the will of God, and his ultimate concern is that God may work out through his life and touch the world. Such expression of sacramental service is made possible only as we commune with Christ and abide in Him. Moreover, sacramental service is the natural result of communing and abiding, for all who will obey will thus serve God as yielded instruments in His hands.

However, in considering the thought of sacramental service with regard to every professed Christian, there is not one follower of Christ who can claim exemption from such demanding service. Like Paul, we are all debtors; but, contrary to the actions of some, we are not in debt to ourselves. Our debt is to God first, and then to others. We could very well say that the duty and obligation of every follower of Christ is to serve sacramentally.

Yet, as we have already indicated, though we ought to have communion with Christ, it cannot be considered on the basis of duty. For it is a high privilege offered

in love, and it is to be accepted by us in love. The same is true with our expression of sacramental service. Although it is certainly our duty to do the will of God, we can never please God by just doing what we feel to be our duty. Our service must also flow from the spring of love, fully responding to the love of God with utter abandon. Whatever service is done without love is done in vain.

Thus, sacramental service is allowing God to use our lives in any way He sees fit-not just because it is our duty, but because we love Him. If we love Him, we will use every means available, every opportunity afforded, that we might have closer fellowship together. Furthermore, for the excellency that is found in communion with Christ we will gladly lose duty in love, we will voluntarily submerge our self-will in His will, and we will joyously cover the identity of our glory with His. Such a disposition is not a part of our natural birth, but it becomes a part of us as we obey the wooings of the Holy Spirit.

Again, we should remember that communion with Christ will be openly expressed in sacramental service. In retrospect, both communion with Christ and sacramental service are dependent upon forgiveness of sins and the purging of the disposition of sin. Fellowship with Christ is begun as we repent of our sins and accept Him as our personal Saviour. It is enhanced as we obey Him in partaking of the physical elements of Communion, but our fellowship is deepened only as we also partake of Him in Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to come and sanctify us wholly.

Communion with Christ cannot be complete unless we heed the words: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification . . ." (cf. I Thess. 4:1-7). Only by the indwelling presence of His Spirit will we find the ability to walk worthy of God's fellowship, and only by the assistance of His Spirit will our efforts in Christian service become sacramental elements that point the unsaved unto Jesus Christ.

Hence, communion with Christ is more than a physical sacrament; it is a life of fellowship that crystallizes into service. It is not that we should disregard the physical elements -- if so, our physical testimony would be lacking. As the ritual of Communion is Christ's physical testimony to us, so our lives are a physical witness of Him to an unbelieving world. Thus, both are sacraments that are used of God to draw men closer unto Him. Applied in faith, they become food which saves and sustains the souls of men.

Without the life of the Spirit, without a spiritual response, all physical pretense is in vain. Every extent of our lives and service is derived from the life-food of being united with Christ. No physical ceremony or service is of value to God except such spiritual dependence and communion with Christ have been firmly established.

On the other hand, physical ceremony and service are to be the natural outgrowth of expressing that our hearts live in harmony with the Lord Jesus,

seeking their only nourishment from Him. Spiritual communion remains the foundation of any ceremony or service, but in a very real sense every external expression deepens the spiritual impression of the life of the Spirit in our lives when it is done because of faith in Christ. Therefore, feeding on Jesus, in communion with Him, involves the full spectrum of human experience -- both physical and spiritual.

Hence a hungering and a thirsting for the Lord Jesus Christ should permeate all our thoughts of life. Then, like-mindedness with Christ shall dominate any desire for communion, and it will confirm every gesture of service. Apart from Christ we are nothing. Without His life we are dead. Without His food we must surely die. Thus, without Him our every personal accomplishment is in vain.

This overwhelming realization pronounces that His food is the only source of nourishment for everlasting life. It affirms that the benefits of God's salvation attend the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ alone. Communion with Him is our only hope for life and usefulness. It refers to the unification of our lives with His life in every aspect and circumstance of Life.

Man's way is the way of self-determination, indulging in self-desire, selfish-ambition, feasting on the fleshpots of this world. Christ's way is plain. The message can be reduced to few and simple words: FEED ON JESUS!

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02 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Olin A. Curtis, The Christian Faith (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1956), p. 431.

2 Ibid., p. 432.

3 Cf. Ibid.

4 Ibid. p. 433.

5 Cf. Ibid.

6 Andrew Murray, Abide in Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company), pp. 73-74.

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03 Chapter Notes

1 Oswald Chambers, The Psychology of Redemption (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1951), p. 86.

2 H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1946), II, 222.

3 Ibid., p. 226.

4 Ibid., p. 230.

5 Ibid., p. 231.

6 Cf. Ibid., pp. 230-31.

7 cf. Oswald Chambers, Biblical Psychology (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1941), p. 35.

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04 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Oswald Chambers, Conformed To His Image (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, LTD., 1950), pp. 9 f.

2 Cf. Curtis, op. cit., pp. 317 ff.

3 William Burt Pope, Compendium of Christian Theology New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1880), II, 144.

4 Cf. Wiley, op. cit., II, 185.

5 Ibid., p. 188; cf. p. 189.

6 Andrew Murray, Humility (New York: Fleming H. Revell), pp. 24-26; cf. pp. 27-28.

7 cf. Wiley, op. cit., III, 203 f.

8 Ibid., p. 209.

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05 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Murray, Humility, op. cit., pp. 35 f.

2 Cf. Chambers, Psychology of Redemption, op. cit., p. 85.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 87.

5 Cf. Murray, Humility, op. cit., pp. 36 f.

6 Cf. Matthew Henry, Commentary (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company), VI, 732.

7 Ibid., V, 948.

8 Cf. A. M. Hills, Holiness in the Book of Romans (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1951), pp. 78 ff.

9 Cf. Chambers, Psychology of Redemption, op. cir., pp. 101 f.

10 Cf. H. Orton Wiley, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1959), pp. 293 f.

11J. A. Seiss, The Gospel in Leviticus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, reprint), pp. 47,106.

12 Cf. Ibid., pp. 33 ft.

13 Wiley, The Epistle to the Hebrews, op. cit., p. 417.

14 Cf. Seiss, op. cir., pp. 46 f.

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06 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Samuel Chadwick, The Way of Pentecost (Berne, Ind.: Light and Hope Publications, 1937), pp. 27 f.

2 Ibid., p. 50.

3 Wiley, Epistle to the Hebrews, op. cit., p. 130.

4 Cf. Ibid., pp. 131 f.

5 Chadwick, op. cit., p. 44.

6 Cf. Samuel Eyles Pierce, The Gospel of the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), pp. 51 ft.

7 Cf. Ibid., pp. 64 f.

8 Cf. Chadwick, op. cir., pp. 46 f.

9 cf. Ibid., pp. 72 f.

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07 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Murray, Abide in Christ, op. cit., pp. 11-16, 24-29.

2 Cf. Matthew Henry, op. cit., V, 1123.

3 Cf. Murray, Abide in Christ, op. cit., pp. 134 ff.

4 Cf. Chambers, Conformed to His Image, op. cit., pp. 51-63.

5 Cf. Murray, Abide in Christ, op. cit., pp. 167 ff.

6 Cf. Ibid., pp. 161 ff.

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08 Chapter Notes

1 Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953), p. 60.

2 Cf. Olive Wyon, The Altar Fire (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 85 ff.

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09 Chapter Notes

1 Cf. Chambers, Conformed to His Image, op. cit., pp. 92 ff.

2 Cf. Chambers, The Psychology of Redemption, op. cit., pp. 98 ff.

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