

THE DISTINCTION
BETWEEN
THE LORD'S TABLE
AND
THE LORD'S SUPPER
BRIEFLY CONSIDERED.

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THE LORD'S TABLE,

1 Cor. x. 14-22.

THE expressions used in these verses are very familiar to most of us here; verse 16, for instance. But often they convey very little meaning to our minds. Look at verse 21: how often we speak of the Lord's table, without any clear idea of the nature of the subject. We say, So-and-so has been received at the Lord's table, or put away from the Lord's table; some have even gone so far as to think the Lord's table is applicable only to one particular body of Christians.

It is significant that verse 21 is the only place in the New Testament where the expression "the Lord's table" occurs. It is strange, too, that the expression "*partakers of the Lord's table*" is so seldom used by us. Most of us, if asked whether we were "partakers of the Lord's table," would think partaking of the Lord's supper was meant. But there are two different expressions used: in chapter x. we have the

Lord's table, and in chapter xi. the Lord's supper, and the Spirit never uses two different expressions without some definite purpose. The table is introduced before the supper, and I think we must enter a little into what it is to be a partaker of the Lord's table, before we can be in a fit state to eat the Lord's supper in a scriptural way.

Now I think it can be shown that every child of God is a partaker of the Lord's table, though he may not actually take the supper, but eating the bread and drinking the cup would be the outward expression of it. It is most important that this truth should be grasped. Let us just see, then, the connection in which the Lord's table is brought in here.

From chapter vii. we see that the Corinthians had written to Paul about certain difficulties, and he is in the chapter before us still answering those questions. In chapter vii. he deals with the subject of marriage; in chapter viii. it is "touching things offered to idols," and while he is dealing with this subject, the Lord's table is introduced;—that is the reason for the reference to idolatry in chapter x. 14. The Corinthians had been converted from all the varied forms of idolatry in the Greek and Roman

cults; and idolatry involved the worship of demons. When, at the first, man lost the knowledge of the true God, they began to deify their own lusts and imaginations; *e.g.*, Bacchus was the god of wine, and the Bacchanalian festival was a scene of excesses of every kind. The Devil took advantage of all this and acquired immense power over the world. There was the Delphic oracle, for instance, which answered all questions and corresponded to the modern spiritism; so we see their idols were really representatives of demons. The Corinthians ask, "Are we to eat meats sacrificed to idols?" Paul replies that, if they eat knowingly, they identify themselves with idols and have fellowship with demons, and says it is impossible to have fellowship with demons and with the Lord at the same time.

The expression "the Lord's table" is, however, found in the Old Testament, and its use there helps to an understanding of its New Testament meaning. In Mal. i. 7, we read: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine *altar* . . . in that ye say, The *table* of the Lord is contemptible." The altar and the table, as we here see, are identical, and this is further supported by another reference, Ezek. xli. 22: "The

altar of wood was three cubits . . . This is the *table* which is before the Lord." When we see this, we understand better the meaning of 1 Cor. x. 18, "Behold Israel after the flesh : are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ?" This verse is the key to the passage, and Paul uses it as an illustration ; we might say "partakers of the table," instead of "partakers of the altar," the altar and table being identical.

The reference here is to Israel "*after the flesh*" and the peace offering in Lev. iii. would be a good illustration of it. The name peace offering is apt to mislead somewhat, as it conveys the idea of making peace with God, which is not the thought at all. It is rather the thought of peace and prosperity, as J. N. D. translates it in the French Bible, "*sacrifice de prospérité.*" It is thanksgiving and praise, essentially a communion offering. God had his part, Aaron and his sons theirs, the priest who sprinkled the blood his, and lastly, the offerer had his share. In Lev. iii., notice the burnt offering is the foundation of the peace offering. So in verse 16, the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar.

A very beautiful expression is used here : the fat "is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour ; all the fat is the Lord's." It

shall be a statute . . . that ye eat neither fat or blood." Thus the eating of the fat, as of the blood, was forbidden. The fat indicates the energy of the inward will; cf. Deut. xxxii. 15, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked"—the will was in opposition to God. Here the fat was not the Lord's. In the Lord Jesus, there was perfect subjection and devotedness: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." There the fat was all the Lord's.

If the energy of our will does not act in accordance with God, it is sin. The definition of sin is a serious matter. In the authorised version of John iii. 4, we read, "Sin is the transgression of the law." This is incorrect, because then there would have been no sin before the law, and we read in Rom. v. 13, "Until the law, sin was in the world." The New Translation of 1 John iii. 4, is, "Sin is lawlessness." That is, when we act independently, we act without law; it is sin. For instance, there is a law of gravitation; if the earth were to break away from that law and go off at a tangent, that would be lawlessness. So, whenever our wills act independently of God, that is lawlessness, and the fat is not the Lord's. What perfection of obedience and devotedness to God

there was in Jesus, how much on which the heart of God could feed with infinite delight !

In Lev. vii. 31, we find, "The priest shall burn the fat upon the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons." The breast is the seat of the affections. Now in verse 15 we read that "it must be eaten the same day that it is offered," and in verse 18, if any be eaten on the third day, it shall not be accepted, in fact, "it shall be an abomination." Why was this ? It was because, if it was kept, it dissociated the eating from the sacrifice on the altar. So in Lev. iii. 5 : "Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice," that is to say, The burnt offering is the foundation of the peace offering. This eating of the sacrifice, then, was not like ordinary eating ; in eating, they were associated with all the sweet savour of the sacrifice before God, and in all the value which He set upon that sacrifice.

In Lev. i. 4 there is a wonderfully peace-giving truth. This is seen in regard to the burnt offering. It speaks of atonement, and it is a beautiful way of setting forth the gospel. "He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering ; and *it* shall be accepted for him to make *atonement* for him." The placing of the hand upon the

head was the identification of the offerer with all the value of the sacrifice before God. It was not a question of what he was; the question was, What value did God put upon the sacrifice? If the offering was accepted, the offerer was accepted; if it was rejected, he was, too.

The gospel is often put thus: Have you accepted Christ as your Saviour? This is simple enough, and yet our hearts make a difficulty even of this, and souls are in doubt as to whether they have accepted the gospel or not. But it becomes more grandly simple if we put it in this way: Has God accepted the sacrifice of Christ for you? There can be only one answer to that, and all doubts are ended; we are accepted in all the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ; instead of our natural enmity there is only the devotedness of Christ even to death. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." The Father must love the Son. How far have we grasped the fact that we are in the same sweet savour before God, as Christ is Himself? The whole question is settled once for all, and we are accepted. This is the foundation of the peace offering, where thanksgiving is rendered.

Now all this is connected with the Lord's table by way of illustration, and how wonderful it would be if we entered into it.

Having looked at the Old Testament illustration, we see better the meaning of 1 Cor. x. 18; the apostle might equally well say here: Are not they which eat of the sacrifices "partakers of the table;" and to be partaker of the Lord's table is to be in all the value of the sacrifice of Christ before God, and the outward expression of this is in verses 16 and 17: "The cup of blessing which we bless," and "The bread which we break." It is evident that *blessing* and *giving of thanks* are the same thing. In chapter xiv. 16, "blessing" and "giving of thanks" are the same.

It is important to see here that there are two expressions of fellowship,—fellowship *with* and fellowship *of*. We speak usually of fellowship with one another, more in the sense of 1 John i. 7; but here it is not communion *with*, but communion *of*. It must be remarked here that the words "communion" (verse 16), "partakers" (verse 18) and "fellowship," all represent the same root-word of the original, which gives the idea of sharing in common. Look at Luke v. 10: "Partners with" is the same word as

“partakers” here, *i.e.*, sharers in common of the fish caught. But in verse 7, “partners” is a different word, meaning that they shared not the fish but the privilege of fishing in the lake. This is the word used in Heb. vi. 4, “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” where people may share in the privileges of Christianity and be lost. Our use of the word “partner,” shows the thought. The fellowship, or communion, of the blood of Christ is the sharing in common with all God’s children in all the value of His wonderful death. There are three “fellowships of” in Corinthians :

(1.) 1 Cor. i. 9 : “The fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” All the true church is called to it. It is “of” and not “with,” and means that we share the blessings in common with all saints of being livingly associated with the Son of God, on the other side of death ;

(2.) 1 Cor. x. 16 : “The fellowship of the blood and body of Christ ;” and

(3.) 2 Cor. xiii. 14 : “The fellowship of the Holy Ghost.” To many, as now used, this expression is merely a sign of the end of a service, but what does it mean ? It means that we share with all true Christians the results of the dwelling here of the Holy Ghost and of His

power to make good the truth in our souls. But, of course, each one of these is a subject in itself.

In chapter x. 16, the cup precedes the bread, but in chapter xi. the order is reversed. We should think it extraordinary if one gave thanks for the cup before the bread. Why is the cup put first in chapter x. ? It is because there the thought of the assembling of the Lord's people is not the prominent thought, but rather our association with Christ's death, and so the cup is put first. When we drink the wine, what thought does it bring to our minds ? The wine is appropriated and ingested into the body, but this is only an outward expression of the blessed truth, that the believer in Jesus is identified with all the value of the death of Christ before God ; it is a wonderfully peace-giving thought. It means more even than that. The death of Christ opened the flood gates of God's love to man ; it was the love of His heart that gave rise to all His purposes of grace. But the question of sin had to be settled first. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished." That baptism was accomplished in His death, and now the fulness of God's heart of love can flow

out to us, and our hearts can go out in love to Him. This is what He desires.

It is to be noticed, for there is meaning in it, that, while in chapter xi. it is the Lord Jesus who gave thanks, here it is "*we* bless" (verse 16). In this chapter there is something of the responsibility side and we have also "the communion of the body of Christ." The latter expression conveys the thought, in scripture, that an end has been made of man in the flesh, *e.g.*, Rom. vii. 4 : "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ;" when we have the expression "body of Christ" it seems to convey the truth of the end of all that we are by nature in His death ; Heb. x. 10 : "We are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all," and "the sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren ;" as also in Col. i. 22, "Reconciled in the *body* of his flesh through death." We are identified with Him.

We are always, all through the week, "partakers of the Lord's table," and if we were consistent with the truth of this, we should refuse--both as to ourselves and our associations--that which the death of Christ has delivered us from.

In verse 22, jealousy is brought in ; it is because it is intimately connected with idolatry (verse 14). This is shown by the first two commandments (Ex. xx. 4-5). Jealousy is cruel as the grave. It is because He loves us so much, that the Lord is jealous ; He cannot bear to see our hearts divided. It has been asked whether "flee from idolatry" applies to us now. It certainly does ; the last warning in 1 John v. 21, is "Keep yourselves from idols." An idol is anything that usurps the place of God in the heart. We are partakers of the Lord's table all through the week, the "supper" on the Lord's day being the outward expression of it. And it means that we are identified with all the value of the sacrifice of Christ before God, and we should refuse everything that is not according to Him. May God lead us on and help us to enter into it more fully.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE GROUND OF GATHERING,

I Cor. xi. 17-34.

[LAST week we were speaking of the Lord's table, and the chief thought in the subject which is set out in chapter x. was found in verse 21: the partaking of the Lord's table, which is an absolute fact, true of every Christian; it is the participation in all the value of the death of Christ before God, and this is expressed in the breaking of bread, when we actually break the bread and drink the cup. It is *we* who break the bread in chapter x.; here in chapter xi. it is the Lord Himself who does it: "The Lord Jesus . . . took bread, and when *he* had given thanks, *he* brake . . . *he* took the cup, when *he* had supped."

When we actually take the bread, we eat and assimilate it, and it becomes part of ourselves. This is a figure of what we do in the breaking of bread; we are identified before God in all the value of Christ once offered.

Whenever we have the expression, "the body of Christ," the complete end of ourselves as men in the flesh is contemplated, as we clearly saw last week. What, then, is the practical result? One is almost afraid to speak of it. We are always partakers of the Lord's table. How happy it would be then, if we allowed nothing on ourselves and associations that the death of Christ delivered us from, and put away from us all that characterises the old man in consistency with the truth of "the bread which we break"—and the same with that of the cup. Oh, may it be so with us. And it is blessed to know that it is not a question of what we are in ourselves, but of what we are before God in all the infinite value of the sacrifice of Christ, and accepted in all the sweet savour of what Christ is to God.

Chapter x. shows how the righteous love of God can come out to us, and we respond in praise and worship to Him. If consistent with this, we should allow nothing from which His death has delivered us, whether natural, worldly, or religious. It is a tremendous thing, when you think of it.

In chapter x., our assembling together, though involved, is not the principal thought;

but in the case of the Lord's supper, it is. The frequent occurrence of the words, "come together," proves this; in verses 17, 18, 20, 33 and 34, we have them. The assembly comes together on three different occasions in this epistle: in chapter v., in order to maintain the holiness of God's house by putting away a wicked person; here, to eat the Lord's supper; and in chapter xiv., in a more general way, for edification.

It will not be amiss to consider the assembling together, because it is a great thing for us all to see its importance, seeing it is the divinely appointed way that all Christians should thus come together.

First of all, "come together in assembly" (verse 18, N.T.) gives the *character* of the assembling; "in one place" (verse 20) indicates the *locality*. I ask those who are wont so to meet, Have you ever thought what coming together in assembly involves? It is of the very highest importance to see what scripture says on the subject, and I will now just state what I think it embraces and then turn you to scripture to prove it.

First, what it is *not*: it is not a gathering to hear an address, or a gospel preaching, where

one exercises his gift in dependence on the Lord in fellowship with one's brethren, neither would a reading meeting be coming together in assembly, where we usually know before what we are going to read, and where we read the scriptures and talk about them together, counting on God for His blessing. Here it is—"in assembly."

First, we come together as members of the body of Christ, "For we, being many, are one bread, one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (chapter x. 17). It would be impossible to apply this literally and think of every Christian in every part of the world gathered into one place, and partaking of one actual loaf. But we come together as members of the body of Christ, taking account of all the members. In this verse "*we* are all partakers" means all Christians. We come together, then, thus; and surely, it is desirable that all should have a right sense of being members of Christ's body.

Further, we recognise, when thus gathered, that wonderful truth that the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell on earth after the glorification of Jesus, that the church is the dwelling place of God by the Spirit. Another thing,

when we are gathered together, God, by the Spirit is acting there to order and direct all that is to be done.

This is a most important truth, although many have little sense of it; but how important it is that all should be able to see from scripture the ground on which God would have His saints come together. Suppose someone said to you: "I came to your room the other morning and it was quite different to anything I had been to before; there were long pauses, and no one seemed to take the lead, but all was very solemn and impressive; I have never seen anything like it before. Could you explain why you meet in this way? was it the invention of some man?" What answer would you give? Could you produce scriptural warrant for this? Some take it for granted that it is right, and, indeed, have a distinct sense that it is according to God, but we want to get it from scripture and know the power of it. For instance, do you really believe God Himself is actually there, when we come together in the assembly of the saints? Would not the sense of this produce fitting behaviour and proper reverence with us? When we, as children, went to church, we had to behave properly,

show due reverence, take off our hats and so on, because we were told it was the house of God. How much more reverence becomes those who are in the presence of God in the assembly of His saints! In chapter xiv. 24, 25 an unconverted man owns God's presence there. What a wonderful reality it must be!

Such, then, is what I believe "coming together in assembly" means, but let us turn to a few scriptures. First, it is of importance to see the fact of the Holy Ghost being a Divine Person and of His presence here; it is a very real thing to know the presence on this earth of a Divine Person since the day of Pentecost. For example, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts v., what does Peter say? "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the *Holy Ghost*? . . . Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto *God*." The Holy Ghost *is* God, but we are apt to think of Him as a mere influence. Again, in Acts x., when Peter was musing on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, "Get thee down, doubting nothing, for *I* have sent them." Does not this show the Personality, if I may so put it, of the Spirit? So the church on earth is the dwelling-place of God by the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22). Solomon was quite astounded

at the idea: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" he asked at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. vi. 18). Yet this is true, it is a fact since Pentecost.

Next, what authority have we for saying, that when we are thus gathered, the Holy Ghost actually guides and directs? Look at chapter xiv. 23, where we have a similar expression to chapter xi. 20: "When ye come together into one place"; and here we have "The whole assembly came together into one place." What does this assembly consist of? (See verse 33.) God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all assemblies of the *saints*. It is not a mixed company of saved and unsaved, but an assembly of the saints, although an unbeliever might come into the place where the assembly was gathered; and if all prophesied, he would fall down on his face and worship God, and report that "God is in you of a truth" (verses 24, 25).

It is very beautiful, this company composed of saints only. God (by the Spirit) in all assemblies of the saints. God is there guiding and directing as to what is to be done in the assembly of the saints. And this chapter shows the liberty when we come together for

every brother to take part, as led by the Spirit of God. Many skip over this chapter and read chapter xiii. and go straight on to chapter xv. and yet, so far as I know, this is the only chapter in the Bible that gives the internal working of the assembly, when assembled together. Hence its importance.

Let us look at one or two points. In verse 15, we read : " I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also ; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." They prayed and sang in the assembly as led by the Spirit. In verse 19, we have teaching in the assembly ; and in verse 23; prophesying. Prophets in the New Testament are those who communicate the mind of God for the moment to His saints, so as to reach the conscience. Hence the exhortation : " Despise not prophesyings"—not teaching ; and we must be careful not to push aside as inapplicable to ourselves, or as meriting little attention, these God-given prophecies. In verse 24, the conscience is reached and the person brought into the presence of God through the prophesyings of all, and he admits that God is in them of a truth. There have been meetings at which there was such

a sense of the presence of God, that it would have been an intrusion for anyone to get up to minister or teach. It is important that all should get a sense of the actual presence of God when the saints are assembled, and the children taught to behave properly in consequence.

Verse 26. The apostle does not find fault with their having a revelation or a doctrine; what he does say, is: Mind, if you take part in the assembly, let it be for edification. For it does not follow that what I may be enjoying personally is for general edification; it is a question of the Spirit's leading. The tongues were gifts then, but they have ceased now: "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all assemblies of the saints." That, then, is the scripture authority that God, by the Spirit, is in the assembly of the saints to order and direct.

We may notice, by the way, verses 34 and 35. Women have their place in the Lord's service as well as men, and often can serve in a way that men cannot. How beautifully the service of women is brought in, in the Gospels! "They ministered unto Him of their substance." What higher service could Mary and Joanna

and the rest have performed than ministering to Jesus the things He needed? Look how prominent, too, women are at the cross and at the sepulchre. Then we have Phebe (Rom. xvi. 1) and in Acts, Priscilla, who worked with her husband Aquila. They got Apollos right; told him all the truth of Christianity on the lines of Heb. vi. 1: Christ risen and glorified, and the Holy Ghost come down; for before he knew only the baptism of John.

“If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. xiv. 37). This verse is very strongly put. The coming together in the way described in this chapter is the commandment of the Lord. It is not left to us to come together as we think fit, but we have Divine directions in this chapter as to the assembling of the saints.

Supposing an assembly composed of unconverted people came together in this way, what confusion there would be without a leader and without any pre-arranged organisation; but here we come together, not knowing at all what is going to be done or who will take part, but all is harmony, for the Holy Ghost guides and

directs all, and the result is peace and edification. And not only those who actually take part, but everyone present, sisters as well as brothers wait on the Lord. For why do we have pauses in our assembly? Is it not that we are sitting in the presence of God and looking for the Holy Ghost to lead and direct? Now the apostle tells the Corinthians, "If any one takes the place of declaring God's mind, or of being spiritual, let him acknowledge, etc." If any be ignorant let him take the place of being so, that he may learn. Acting upon the truth of what was set up in the beginning and carrying out these commandments of the Lord, is what should distinguish us, but we need to be reminded of it and to have it brought home to us in power and reality.

What led us to this diversion from chapter xi., was the expressions "come together in assembly," and "into one place." The apostle had to tell the Corinthians that when they came together, it was not to eat the Lord's supper. There is a very beautiful expression in Acts xx. 7: "The disciples came together to break bread." Very simple, but involving a vast deal. We come together on the first day of the week to *break bread*. What does the

breaking of bread set forth? It brings before us the Lord Himself in all His love, and then, as directed by the Spirit, we pour out our worship and praise to Him. But it is not that we come together to hear a lecture, to hold a meeting, or even to worship; we come together to *break bread*. This the Corinthians did not.

The expression, "come together to eat the Lord's supper" involves more than the breaking of bread itself, I think; it implies entrance into the truth of what the Lord's supper really means. The Corinthians, though eating the bread and drinking the cup, did not realise the meaning of the supper.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi. 17-34.

YOU will remember that on previous occasions we spoke of the Lord's table in chapter x., and that which marks the truth of the Lord's table we saw to be our association with the death of Christ in all it has effected and in all that to which it has put an end, with regard to our history as of Adam's race. The actual assembling together, though implied here (verses 16, 17), is not spoken of till chapter xi. Four or five times over the coming together is mentioned and in this instance the Corinthians came—or should have come—together to eat the Lord's supper. In chapter x., Paul says, "We being many are one body, for we are all partakers of that one loaf"; so that this, as we saw before, takes in every believer. I suppose it has never been true that all Christians have actually partaken of one loaf; the thought is a moral one, but it takes in the whole church. Coming together in assembly is, as we noticed in chapter

xiv., seeing the wonderful truth of the Holy Ghost's presence and realising that He is there to order and direct all. So, when we come together, there should be a sense that we are in the immediate presence of God Himself.

Here, in chapter xi. 20, he says, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." Though professing to do so, the Corinthians did not eat the Lord's supper. So we infer that taking the Lord's supper does not mean merely eating the bread and drinking the wine, but entering into the truth of all its deep significance. It is not a question of doctrine, but of the affections. The simplicity of the description is most striking. The youngest convert can easily understand it, yet at the same time the oldest saint cannot reach the bottom of it. Some of us have known it for years, and, if it were a human invention, how tired we should have been of it before now, instead of which it comes home with such power and freshness that we begin to think we have hardly entered into it at all.

Before we touch on the actual description of the Lord's supper, let us see in what character we thus come together. The Lord's supper

nas not in view the forgiveness of sins or fitting us for God's presence. In Matthew, I know, we have the expression "for the remission of sins" brought in, but that is one of the terms of the new covenant about which the cup speaks to us, and Matthew gives us the atonement side, for it is only those who know forgiveness and have peace with God who can eat the Lord's supper. I ask the question of each one: How do you think the Lord sees us when gathered? The very truth of His body given and His blood shed, would be the scriptural answer, and shows that He does not regard us as sinners or fallen children of Adam. We come together—it is important to see this—as His brethren. A wonderful expression! Have we individually entered into the truth of being His brethren? We think of Heb. ii. 11: "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." What cause? It is because they are "all of one," like Himself, clear of Adam and livingly associated with the risen Son of God on the other side of death. Have we individually entered into the truth of being His brethren?

He sees us also as His friends; what leads me to this is John xv. 13. The thirteenth chapter begins a fresh section of the gospel, in view

of His passing out of the world to the Father. Read chapter xiii. 1. Jesus knew He was going to depart out of the world to the Father, and not only that, but He knew the Father had given all into His hand (verse 3). Do you know what that means? He was conscious that all the eternal purposes of the Father before the world began were committed to Him. Then think of all the truth of those chapters, xiii. to xvii. inclusive. Has it ever struck you that he, the beloved disciple, the one who was ever nearest to Jesus, who lay on His breast, never says a word about the supper? You would think he would have been the very one to do so. No, but it is very beautiful and instructive that instead of giving an account of the actual supper (in chapters xiii. to xvii., where we have what passed in the upper chamber), John brings before us all the truth that the Spirit of God brings before us at the supper.

How does he begin? Jesus is departing out of the world, and His own are still left down here, but His love is still the same,—and that is the very thing that comes before us in the supper. And first, He begins to remove all questions as to their fitness for it; that is

settled, for He says to Peter: "He that is bathed (all over—a different word is used for 'bathe' and 'wash') is clean every whit." What do you understand by that? When a priest was consecrated, he was bathed all over, and that once only; he was not washed in blood. The body bathed means that you are "clean every whit," not merely with regard to sins; all that we are as fallen sons of Adam is ended, in the death of Christ, and we are fitted for a scene where sin can never enter. Water, as well as blood, flowed from the side of the dead Christ; the blood meets my guilt, the water my state by nature.

Then in chapter xv. we read, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." I think the verse of the hymn we sing:

No man of greater love can boast
Than for his friend to die;
Thou for Thine enemies wast slain,
What love with Thine can vie?

hinders people from appreciating the meaning of this scripture. The thought expressed in the hymn is quite different from the Lord's thought in John xv. In the hymn we think of ourselves as His enemies, which is the exact

opposite to "Ye are my friends." Why are we His friends? It is because all He has heard of the Father He has made known to us.

Have we the sense of being clean every whit, bathed once for all; ended as to our life as Adam's children; dead to all that order of things, and living in Him in resurrection life beyond death; His friends, His brethren? It makes all the difference if we have, for it sets us free to think of Him. The perfection of His love brought Him down to death for His friends. If we entered into this, we should not be occupied with our fitness and so on, but should be overflowing with praise and worship, as we see all His glory and beauty, and think of His love, in which we lose ourselves. It is a very simple but none the less a real truth, that we shall not be more loved in the glory than now, nor shall we be more fit. It is quite true we are hampered, since we are still, as to our bodies, linked with Adam, but "as he is, so are we in this world."

Let us now look at what this scripture tells us of the Lord's supper. The first sentence of verse 23 is very important: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Paul had received the truth of the Lord's sup-

per, not from Peter or John, but as a special revelation from the Lord after He had ascended into glory. Now does not this show what the Lord thinks of the supper, and how He appreciates our remembrance of Himself and our responding to His love? His own heart of love, which brought Him down into death, gives this revelation to Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Jews might otherwise have said that, connected with the passover as it was, the supper was only for Jews—but the Lord gives it to him as a distinct and direct message to the Gentiles.

I cannot conceive how any Christian can be happy if he does not partake of the Lord's supper. Some think it is not essential to do so, but that is a very poor thing. Others think it is very blessed, but fear they are not up to it and would only prove inconsistent with it in their daily walk. Many Christians, moreover, think they are not worthy, through mistaking the meaning of verse 29. What is it to eat and drink unworthily? I knew someone who considered herself unworthy to take the Lord's supper. We happened to have had a reading on Luke xx. 34-36, by which she had been greatly helped. She had seen that those who

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were "counted worthy to obtain that world" were those who had no worthiness of their own, but trusted in the worthiness of Another, so as to obtain that world and be with Christ in glory. So I said to her: "Surely, if you are counted worthy to obtain that world, you are worthy to eat the Lord's supper." But still she was not satisfied. I did not know what to say; she still came to the meeting but could not see her way to take the Lord's supper. At last I said to her: "Have you ever thought that your remembering the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread would give Him joy?" "Oh, no; I had only thought of my fitness." "Well, it would, believe me, give His heart positive joy to see from you a response to His loving request." After that it was all clear.

Do you remember the home at Bethany, where Jesus spent most of the last six days of His life here? Why did He go there, to Martha, Mary and Lazarus? Ah, there were hearts there that appreciated His company and valued His love in contrast to the coldness, hardness of heart, and hatred of the world around. The Lord went up to heaven from Bethany, and that Bethany has continued even till now, since the Lord Jesus has, in the midst of a world

that hates Him and that crucified Him, positive joy in the response of His own to His love. It is very beautiful to see that side, and that is why I cannot imagine how one of the Lord's people can refrain from taking the Lord's supper.

As I may not have an opportunity to speak of it again, I would just like to say a word on verse 29. Here it is not a question of being worthy to eat, but of eating unworthily—"not discerning the Lord's body." What is meant by that? What does the bread set forth? It sets forth the Lord's body given for us, and this signifies that there is the removal in His death of all that we are, as involved in the fall of Adam. This truth is implied in the breaking of bread. Perhaps when we are assembled together, in spite of all contrary efforts, our minds are filled with other thoughts, thoughts of ourselves, our failures and shortcomings, thoughts of every-day business, and so on. What a relief then it is, to know that all this has been removed in the death of Christ, brought so vividly before us in the bread, which is His body given for us, and to know that God now regards us in Another beyond and apart from that altogether. He who eats unworthily forgets this,

and indulges the flesh, allowing what is not of God ; he eats the supper, but allows that from which the Lord's death has delivered him. The Lord in His love cannot leave such a person alone, but He comes in, by way of discipline. Do you think it would be right or kind of Him to leave you alone, if you were going on in a way displeasing to Him? No, He would bring you to your senses, as it were, and let us praise Him for it.

In the New Testament we find four truths revealed especially to Paul: (1) the gospel (1 Cor. xv. 3) ; (2) the rapture (1 Thess. iv.) ; (3) the Lord's supper, in this passage ; and (4) the mystery, Christ and the church (Eph. iii. 3). Here it was revealed to him, how the *Lord* Jesus—not Jesus, but the One Who is the exalted Lord in the highest place in glory—“The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks”—what a thanksgiving that must have been and how He looked on to the full result of the death He was about to accomplish!—“*He* brake it, and said: Take, eat, this is my body, which is for you. This do in remembrance of me.” When was it? On “the same night in which he was delivered up” (as

it should read); this is a much wider thought than that of the Authorised Version rendering, which confines it to Judas' treachery. What does it involve? That was the hour, when all that was in man's heart came out, when all the wickedness of man rose to its height—the treachery of Judas, the weakness of Peter and of His disciples, the hatred of the scribes and priests, the cruel mockery of the soldiers, the unrighteousness of Pilate who thrice protested His innocence and finally gave Him up to be slain, and, behind all, the power and energy of Satan, leading Jew and Gentile to crucify the Lord of glory, Who could say, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." In that hour did the Lord Jesus declare all the fulness of the love of God. And we have to own that all that came out there was what is in the heart of each one of us by nature, and we must each apply it to himself. But the Lord in His love has freed us from the man of sin and shame: "This is my body, which is for you." And now He looks upon us as His brethren, as sanctified and clear of the old, fallen state altogether.

So it is no question of doctrine, but one of the affections being in exercise, and if it is re-

garded as a duty, it loses all its significance. What would you think of a family professing to love their father, if, when he was away from home for a long time and sent them his photograph with a request that they would place it on the mantelpiece in order to have a constant remembrance of him, they simply said: "We suppose we must do it, as he asks us to"? There would not be much love there, would there? No, it is not a duty, it is not doctrine, but the response of the affections, and the older one gets and the longer one goes on with the Lord's supper, the more real, the more beautiful it becomes.

And it is "till he come." We are placed between His death—to which we look back to see all the ground-work and foundation of everything for God and for us—and His coming again, when first, as a preliminary, He will catch us up to be with Himself, and will then return to set up the kingdom.

How beautiful it is in Matthew, when He says: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it *new* with you in the kingdom of my Father." The wine speaks of the joy which He will share with us, the intense joy that will be His, and in

that new state of things—that vast system of glory, of which He will be the Head and Centre. The expression, “the kingdom of my Father” occurs only in Matthew, in (1) the Lord’s prayer; (2) chapter xiii. : “Then shall the righteous shine . . . in the kingdom of their Father;” and (3) here. It is the heavenly side of the world to come, and we too shall shine as the sun in that day for the millennium earth. How wonderful is this glimpse of the Lord Jesus giving thanks in view of that day.

“After the same manner also he took the cup.” This is different from chapter x., “the cup of blessing which we bless,” for here it is the Lord who puts it into our hands. And is it not remarkable that the Lord here introduces the new covenant? Surely He must have thought a good deal of it to link it with His supper. I think many of us have too little understood the new covenant—a great thing to grasp. What is expressed in the new covenant? The new covenant is the expression of the love of the heart of God. I have not time now to prove it to you from scripture, so it must be taken on trust until another time. So in the bread, the Lord’s love comes before us in a very special way, and when He gives us the cup, He directs

our hearts into the love of God; it is the Lord Himself that does it. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us," we have in Rom. v., but here it is the Lord Himself doing it. Does not He know the love of God? Yes, both as God and as Man, He knows it fully, and He delights to lead our hearts into it now. By nature we are on quite different lines, for we are afraid of God, and many Christians imagine that the Son came here to reconcile the Father to us. The Lord would undo all that dread which the enemy has instilled into us, and would lead our hearts into all the love of God, that we might respond to it.

What marvellous times we ought to have, privileged as we are to know the Father; conscious, too, of the Spirit's presence and power, and of the Lord's delight to have an answer to His love. What a privilege it is! May the Lord lead us on to a greater sense of all its meaning, simple enough for the youngest to see, but so profound that none can ever fathom all its depth.

THE NEW COVENANT.

I Cor. xi. 25, 26.

WISHING to bring before you the truth of the new covenant a little, I have just read these verses to connect this subject with what we have had on previous occasions. It is most remarkable that the Lord should have introduced the new covenant in connection with the cup, and this but shows the importance which He Himself attached to the knowledge of the truth of the new covenant. So it is very important that all God's children should get a scriptural idea of the new covenant and of the reason, too, why the Lord Jesus connected it with the cup. As we have already seen, when we take the bread, we are set free from ourselves before God, in order that, as His brethren, we may be able to think of the love that brought Him down into death for us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Then in the cup we have more what Paul so beautifully prayed for

in 2 Thess. iii. 5: the Lord directs our hearts into the love of God. In Rom. v. we have the love of God shed abroad by the Spirit—and the Spirit is the only power by which divine things can be made good in our souls—but the apostle here puts it: “*The Lord* direct your hearts into the love of God.” Does not He know the love of God? As God, He Himself is love: and as Man, He lives in the full, uninterrupted enjoyment of the love of God. “He liveth unto God”; He knows what life is, the full knowledge of God and of all His love.

Now we will look first at what I may call the terms of the new covenant and its blessings, and then at what scripture calls the Spirit of the new covenant. And first read the passage in the Old Testament that is quoted in the New (Jer. xxxi. 31).

Now, with whom is the new covenant primarily made? With the house of Israel and the house of Judah. We, as Gentiles, are neither one nor the other, and so may well ask what application it has to us. Why did the Lord speak of the new covenant when revealing the truth of His supper to Paul? What has it to do with us Gentiles? The answer is found in

2 Cor. iii. 6 : “ God, who also has made us able ministers of the new covenant ”—not exactly of the doctrine of it, but of its practical reality and present application ; look at what comes next : “ not of the letter, but of the spirit.” The letter is what we have literally, in Jeremiah. The spirit of what underlay God’s mind and the principles on which He will deal with Israel when they are restored in the new covenant, He applies to us now. And it is an interesting point—I do not know if all have got hold of it—that all the blessings that Israel will have in the future are to be known *now* in a spiritual way by us. The new covenant is one example. It will be actually accomplished in the millenium (a human name this, showing merely its duration of 1,000 years), or, as scripture calls it “ the world to come,” a name which shows its contrast with this present age. The expression occurs four or five times in the Bible, *e.g.*, Heb. ii. 5 ; Mk. x. 30, etc. We get all the blessings of the new covenant now, in the spirit, but not in the letter.

The scriptural thought of the new covenant is given us in 2 Cor. iii. Read on from verse 6 : “ For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,” to verse 17 : “ Now the *Lord* is the *Spirit* ”

(**New Translation**). Of what? Why, the Spirit of the new covenant. Nobody can possibly understand the chapter, if he does not see that verses 7-16 are a parenthesis; read verses 16 and 17 straight on together and what connection do you see between them? None at all; but you do, of course, by leaving out the parenthesis and reading on from verse 6 to verse 17. The Lord, then, is the Spirit of the new covenant; it is not Christ or Jesus, but the Lord, the One who has been down into death, but who now is risen and exalted to the highest place in glory and, as Lord, administers all the blessings of the new covenant. He, as Lord, is the Spirit of the new covenant, which might be summed up in one word—Love. “For hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (1 John iii. 16).

Now let us look at the terms of the new covenant and see how they apply to us, since what Israel will have in the future, we have and enjoy now. First of all, it is “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers.” It is of great importance to see the negative side, for God would impress us with the fact that the new covenant is quite unlike the old, and does not depend at all on what we are or do. It has

been well said, that the old covenant was comprised in the words: "Thou shalt"; but the new covenant is: "I will," all from God's side. That is the difference, but, important as it is to be clear about it, many Christians are still on old covenant lines. Titus iii. 4, 5, was written not to the unconverted but to Christians: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

"This shall be the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord";—and then follow all the "I will's." After what days? Why, all the days of the failure in responsibility, of their murmurings and resisting of the Holy Ghost, of their rejecting and killing the prophets and messengers of God, and, finally, of their murder of the Just One, when you would have thought that nothing but judgment could fall on them. Then it is that God comes out to act on His own account and for His own glory, not according to what we are at all.

There are three distinct parts of this new covenant: (1) "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it on their hearts"—that implies a new nature, new birth; (2) "They shall no more teach every man his neighbour,

. . . but they shall all know *me*." In Heb. viii. (New Translation) it is "know me *in themselves*"—that is conscious knowledge: we cannot get beyond that; and (3) "For I will forgive their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more"—that is the knowledge of God revealed in grace. The law in our hearts, the knowledge of God who is love, and "no more conscience of sins,"—such are the terms of the new covenant. Are not all these blessings ours to-day by the Spirit? If you believe, however little you may enter into them, they are yours. None can say he knows them perfectly; how can you know God perfectly? But many can say they know enough to see how little they really do know, or they know enough to want to know more.

The first of these terms will, of course, be fulfilled in Israel in the world to come; the law will be written in their hearts, as in Psalm cxix. How does this apply to us to-day? Have we the law written in our hearts? Yes, and we, too, have Christ written on our hearts. How is this? Well, the heart is the seat of the affections. But what is the law? Not the ten commandments merely, but, as the lawyer answered rightly, in Luke x. 26, 27: "Thou

shalt love . . .” Is that in the ten commandments? No. The first is quoted from Deut.vi. and the second from Lev.xix. 18, and yet the two sum up the whole law: “Thou shalt love.” Add to this the support of Romans xiii. 9, 10, “Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” and turn to Rom.viii. 4, where, after sin in the flesh has been condemned, the apostle says: “That the righteous requirement of the law . . . might be (New Translation) fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “Righteous requirement” is a remarkable expression. Is it not perfectly right that God should require love from His creatures in return for the great love wherewith He has loved us? And the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, for we love Him because He first loved us, and we love the brethren, and love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. xiii. 10.)

Secondly, “They shall all know me.” Of course, love is the way to know God. “Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God” (1 John. iv. 7). Cannot each one of us say: “We love Him, because He first loved us?” Such are His wonderful purposes and ways of love towards us, that we cannot help loving

Him. "Everyone that loveth . . . knoweth God." Why? It is because, as verse 8 tells us, "God is love"; love is His nature. As fallen children of Adam, we were in darkness and utter ignorance of God; every thought of God the unconverted man has is all wrong, and we knew and cared nothing about God. Added to this is what we get in 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, the blinding of men by the god of this world. How beautiful it is that God wants us to know Him! And how can we? Only as revealed in the Son, who is "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person," and came to earth to make Him known. Look at the leper in Matt. viii. 1-4: Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him, and said, "I will; be thou clean." That leper might have said, "I have known what it is for God to come so near to me as to touch me, and then my leprosy was healed in an instant." That is only a picture of how the Lord has touched us, when He came in contact with sin on the cross, and put it all away.

"They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest,"—not "the greatest to the least"—that is, Israel will know God not nationally but individually. Is there not an immense

deal of truth in the new covenant? In the knowledge of God we have the love of God, and that is why Paul prays: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."

Thirdly, we get what in Hebrews is called "no more conscience of sins." Have you ever noticed that this is quoted just before the passage about "having boldness to enter the holiest"? Before we can enter the holiest, we must be set free of ourselves to enter into the wonderful counsels of God. "The worshippers once purged . . . have no more conscience of sins," is in contrast to the day of atonement, when God raised the question of sins every year (Lev. xvi. 34.), but now He says, "Their sin and iniquities will I remember" (not once a year but) "*no more.*" Can you say, "The question of my sins has been gone into and settled between God and Christ on the cross; and God says, I will never raise the question of your sins again"?

Now the love of God is the essence of the new covenant, and though no verse actually says as much, yet we can get pretty near it in Jer. xxxii. 39-41. "I will rejoice over them to do them good . . . with my *whole heart and with my whole soul.*" This is all in connection with

the everlasting covenant spoken of in verse 40. So it actually gives God positive joy to bless us, as if He said, "You don't know what joy it gives Me to bless you." Does it not show the heart of God? This is what comes out in Luke xv. I do hope all have got hold of this, not merely doctrinally, but in all its intense practical reality.

To return now to 2 Cor. iii.: In the third verse, Christ was written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy (not "fleshly" but "fleshy"—*i.e.* made soft or sensitive) tables of the heart." It is very clear that Paul had in mind the old covenant when he spoke of the tables of stone. The latter, which Moses brought down from the mount, were a picture of man's heart by nature, dead, unimpressionable and irresponsible. Such were our hearts once, but they have by the Spirit's power, in spite of their natural hardness, been made sensitive to the love of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the Spirit of the new covenant, the perfect expression of the love of God, which was perfectly set forth in His death. In that way love is the spirit of the new covenant.

Now turn to Exodus xx. for a moment. After the giving of the law in the earlier part

of the chapter, God evidently has the new covenant in view in verse 24, where unconditional blessing is promised. It was as good as saying that they were certain to fail under the old covenant and God would have to fall back on His sovereign right to bless on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ. The altar of earth is there, speaking of nothing of man, but of what was entirely of God. If the altar was of stones, it was to be of unhewn ones: "If thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it." This blessing was to be entirely on the ground of the sweet savour of the sacrifice on the altar, and all from God's side. That is chapter xx.; what do we get in chapter xxi.? The Spirit of the new covenant. Who was the servant? Why, the Lord Jesus Himself, the Spirit of the new covenant. So the Lord Jesus, the One who assumed a servant's form, might have gone out free, gone straight back to heaven from the mount of transfiguration, but He would have gone alone. But now He has plainly said—and how plainly, too!—"I love my master, my wife and my children," or in New Testament language: "I love the Father" (John xiv. 31); "Christ loved the

Church" (Eph. v. 25); and He loved His earthly people Israel. That is what is seen in the new covenant, the love of God manifested in all its fullness in Christ. For in 2 Cor. iv. 4. we see that Christ is "the image of God," the One who perfectly represents all that God is, and He is the Spirit of the new covenant.

Have you ever noticed that last verse, so often quoted, and seen that it is connected with the new covenant? It is the Lord, as the Spirit of the new covenant, whom we behold with unveiled face, the One who, as we have seen, has displayed all the fullness of God's love. The One who could say so plainly, "I love," and that love perfectly displayed in going into death for us. And as we contemplate Him, and get to know more of His love, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord, the Spirit," and we become more and more morally like Him, and we love, and by love serve one another (Gal. v. 13), even as He took the form of a servant that He might serve us in love for ever.

We have only touched on a few points of this wonderful and marvellous subject, but we have seen what value the Lord Jesus must

have attached to it to speak of it in connection with the cup at the supper, and as we come together and He gives us this cup of the new covenant in "His blood," we are reminded afresh of all the love of God, and delight to pour out our praise and worship to Him who has so delighted to bless us.

May the Lord direct "our hearts into the love of God," for His Name's sake !

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