

Msg #172 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"Why Do We Take Communion?"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about communion. Communion and water baptism are the two rites and rituals of the Christian church. However, even though most Christians partake of communion, not all Christians understand why we do it. But I think that if you're a Christian, and you are going to partake of something that has to do with eternal life, you should know what you're doing and not just do it because the rest of the church does it. So let's take a close look and see if the subject of communion can be made a little more clear for those of you who wonder why we do it and what it's all about.

Now, much of what I'm going to say may be hard to understand, especially if your pastor has never instructed you completely, and especially if you have never been instructed of how and why salvation is actually accomplished. To begin with, salvation comes by believing in the saving blood of Jesus Christ and accepting it for yourself. And, because you accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, you then confess him as Lord and Savior. Of course, this is the basic concept of salvation, and most all professing Christians know this much. However, many people make the mistake of confessing Jesus as Christ, and the Savior of the world, without confessing him as Lord.

Romans 10:9 says that if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, we shall be saved. And also, Philippians 2:9-11 tells us that God has highly exalted Jesus, and has decreed that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord. You see, it isn't just by believing that Jesus is Christ, the Savior of the world, that we are saved, but also that

Jesus Christ is Lord. Not just Savior, but he is also Lord. Also, Acts 2:36 tells us that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. We cannot confess Christ unto salvation unless we also confess him as our Lord. Scripture continually refers to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and not just Savior. And he is Lord because he is our Master, our authority, the leader of our lives, the head of the body of which we are just a part.

Now, knowing that Jesus is Lord as well as Savior, we must also realize that we cannot enter into a relationship with him unless we obey him. Obedience is what you do toward someone who is your Lord. He is, and should be, the controlling factor over you. Now, when you confess Jesus, and confess that he is the Christ, the Savior of the world, and then you also accept him as your Lord and Master, you have finally entered into the saving grace of God. Salvation is assured because you believe he is both Lord and Christ.

Now, the first thing required of a confessing Christian is to be baptized with water. This is a rite, a ritual, performed by a new Christian which demonstrates your intent to serve the Lord Jesus. And notice, I'm not saying that you will always serve the Lord Jesus perfectly, but that your baptism demonstrates the intent to always fully serve him. You see, baptism is not a work, it is a symbolic demonstration of the intent of your heart. By being baptized you will demonstrate the intent of your heart. And this is important, because it is by your heart that you will ultimately be judged. Baptism is only an outward sign indicating what the intent of your heart is, and of the works you intend to do if possible. It symbolized your intention to die daily to the old man of the flesh and to live daily as a born again spirit man in Christ.

Now, follow this next part carefully. As a new Christian, sin will still take place to some extent in your flesh. And no, I'm not suggesting that you will be sinning all the time, but I am suggesting that sin will still be a part of your fleshly existence. No, not in you, the new born again spirit person, but in your flesh, from which you cannot yet completely escape. Remember, 1 Corinthians 15:50 clearly tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. If the flesh could be made perfect in Christ, then we would no longer need Christ. But the flesh cannot be made perfect and we ourselves can only be perfect if we put off the old man of the flesh and put on Christ.

And this is the very essence of today's message. Without understanding this concept of putting off the flesh and putting on Christ, you will never completely understand the reason we take communion. You see, we, as Christians, are no longer flesh and blood, even though we are still housed in bodies of flesh and blood. But we Christians are now born again in spirit. We are no longer flesh and blood persons, but are now born again spirit beings. And, because we are no longer flesh and blood but are born again spirit beings, we will not have to suffer the death which flesh and blood persons will always have to face. It is the escape from death that humans are looking for, and that escape from death is accomplished because - - when the body of flesh dies, we, who have put on Christ, will still live on as spirit beings, but in the body of Christ instead of in our old body of flesh. Remember, it isn't until Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven that we will finally inherit our own glorified bodies.

Now, no man is perfect, except Jesus Christ. And Jesus is the only person who was flesh and blood who has the right to enter into the presence of God. Therefore, if we want to enter into the presence of God, we must first put off our old man of the flesh, and then, as Romans 13:14 says, we must, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” And yes, this is exactly what the Bible says and also what the Bible means. We must put on Christ if we are ever to enter into the presence of God. Jesus Christ is the only man of flesh which is perfect, and therefore he is the only man who is qualified to enter into God’s presence. And, the greatest, most awesome thing is that when we become part of Christ’s body, then we too can enter with him into the very presence of God.

You see, the prophecy was spoken thousands of years ago that God desired a body to be a sacrifice which would atone for the sin of mankind. Because no flesh could possibly be justified from the ranks of humans, God came to earth himself, in the form of his Son, becoming flesh. It had to be God who actually became flesh, because there is no other flesh and blood person who can be good. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:17, “there is none good but one, and that is God.” And this is a very important point to consider. You see, if Jesus was not God, then that would mean that God could turn flesh and blood into something good. If he could do that, then he could also make the rest of us flesh and blood humans to be good. Yet the Bible is very clear when it tells us that there is no one good except God, and also, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

But let’s go one step further and take a look at two verses in the book of John, chapter one. In verse one it says that in the beginning was the Word. It says that the Word was with God, and it also says, very importantly, that the Word was God. Do you hear this? The Word was not just with God, but the Word actually was God.

Because we humans are sons of Adam, we have been born as living souls. This is the state of our present lives prior to being born again in spirit. As sons of Adam, we will all die. Adam and Eve sinned. And because Adam and Eve sinned, death came upon all living souls. We will die because the curse of sin has come upon all flesh. But then, death can be overcome. Death can be overcome by rejecting the flesh and blood bodies we have. When we believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and confess him with our mouth, we can then put our old fleshly man to death. No, we can’t do it perfectly. Jesus Christ, because he is God the Son, was the only one who could put the fleshly man to death. However, we can still accomplish the necessary escape from death. All we have to do is to believe on Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then, because we cannot accomplish perfection, and we cannot perfectly crucify that old man of the flesh, we demonstrate our intention of crucifying the flesh by water baptism. We are immersed in water to demonstrate the concept of death to the man of the flesh, and then we rise up from the water, demonstrating our new born again experience. In this way we have not actually attained our own righteousness because water baptism is not righteousness. The only hope of righteousness is by being in Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in water, which shows openly what we desire to take place. And because of the extreme grace of God, and only because of his goodness, we are accepted as having accomplished the act of dying out to the flesh and living according to the will of Jesus. Eternal life is ours, not because we have become good in the flesh, and not because the flesh has

actually yet died, but because we have believed. Two things have taken place. First, we have confessed the Lord Jesus with our mouths. Second, we have confessed the Lord Jesus with our body by the action of baptism. These two testimonies we give are sufficient to give us the hope of eternal life. As the Bible says, it is only by the testimony of two or three witnesses that anything may be established. The confession of our mouth is one testimony, and the action of our body in water baptism is the second testimony, and thirdly, in addition to the first two testimonies, our spirit will give testimony if our heart is true, and our lives will begin to show forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit who now dwells within us.

You see, salvation can only be attained by the putting away of the flesh and by the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. We put on Christ because Christ is the only flesh that was perfect. And because he was the only perfect flesh and blood person, he is therefore the only person who is able to come into the presence of God. When we put on Christ, when we become part of the body of Christ, we become one with him, just as a man and women become one flesh. We are united with Christ into one body. No, not several bodies, just one body. We are all part of the body of Christ. One is the elbow, one is the toe, one is the eye, etc. But Christ is the head of the body. And because Christ is the head of the body, he directs the actions and work of the body. You see, it's the head of the body which tells the rest of the body what to do and what to speak. The head of the body is the authority of the body, just as God the Father is the guiding authority over the Spirit and Son.

As Christians, we confess this whole concept of putting on Christ by taking communion. The cup that we drink is the blood of Christ, and the bread that we eat is the body of Christ. In this way we continually demonstrate that being in Christ is the only way to enter into the presence of God.

Sometimes Christians don't realize how important the scripture is which tells us that we are all members of one body. We are all part of Christ, and members in particular. Not many bodies, but one body, the body of Christ. Just as Christ walked the earth in the days of his crucifixion, his body still walks the earth. No not Christ as he was then, but Christ as the head of a born again spirit body made up of him as the head and all Christians as the individual parts. The church of today is the body of Christ, which allows God to be seen in the flesh. We are the testimony of God on earth, showing the righteousness and love that God is. At least, we're supposed to be. Sometimes the church of today isn't a very good representation of Christ's body, but then, this is all that the world has as an outward display of God's goodness.

The testimony of communion is a testimony to the world and to other Christians, demonstrating the story of Christ's death and atonement for the sins of the world. When we take communion, we are testifying to everyone that it is only by becoming part of Christ that we can be saved. It is the cup of wine which demonstrates the life giving blood of Christ. And, it is the bread that demonstrates the formation of the children of God into one body. It's like the old saying, "you are what you eat." As you partake of the cup of wine and broken bread, you become the body of Christ. It is a spiritual concept of course, not a physical one, because we are still locked within

our old physical flesh and blood bodies until such time as Jesus comes back in the clouds of heaven. But in spiritual form, we have been born again. We are a new life, all together as one, just as Romans 12:5 says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." You see, we are one body. We are all members of that one body, and this is why we take communion because we recognize this simple principle. Jesus told the people that unless they ate his flesh and drank his blood, they could have no part with him. We must all eat the flesh and blood of Christ in order to take part in his righteousness and to enter into the presence of God.

Now, here's another thought. Many times Christians make the mistake of thinking that the promise to Abraham of God saving all nations was a promise given to many people. But the promise, as Paul tells us in Galatians 3:16, was to Abraham and his seed. Now this is a hard part. It's a difficult part. But Paul explains that the promise to Abraham of all nations being blessed in his seed, was not going to come about through the lives of all of Abraham's descendants, but only through one descendant. That descendant of Abraham who would be called to bring blessings to all nations was, and is, Jesus Christ. Jesus is that seed of Abraham through whom the promises of Abraham were to be fulfilled.

Now, take this slowly and think about it. I know it's not easy to understand. Even the Apostle Peter said that many of the things that Paul spoke of were hard to understand. But Paul had been given an insight into heavenly things. As he said in Galatians 3:16, the promise to Abraham of blessing all nations was a promise to Abraham's seed. Not many seeds, but just a promise to one seed, and that seed was Christ.

And think about it. If the promise of blessing to Abraham had been to every seed of Abraham instead of just one seed, then the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees would have been eligible for the blessing, just because they were descendants of Abraham. You see, God had told Abraham that the promise of all nations being blessed in righteous Abraham was only to come to the called seed of Isaac. It wasn't all of Isaac's seed, otherwise, again, the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees would have been automatically blessed just because they were descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac. But the blessing was not to many seeds, but only to one seed. Romans 9:7 says, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." This is Paul's quote from Genesis 21:12.

It was from the descendants of Isaac that the seed of Abraham would eventually come, and the one single seed who would be called was Christ. Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham, and Jesus would bring life in the spirit to every person who became part of him. Jesus is that life from God, and all those who become part of Jesus in spirit have put on Christ, and therefore have the right to enter with Jesus into the presence of God. That's why Romans 8:17 calls us, "joint heirs." We are joint heirs with Christ if we abide in Christ. As all Christians are members of that one body, so are we all joint heirs with Christ, and will inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus is the head of the body. All those who have given up their own headship and made Jesus their Lord are saved. They have made Jesus their head and have therefore been delivered from

the curse of sin which came upon all flesh through the sin of Adam. This is our testimony to the world that we are in Christ, that there is only one body. And by our taking of communion we show to the whole world that the only way to enter into the kingdom of God is to partake of Christ, thereby becoming part of Christ.

When the Bible tells us to take communion, it also tells us that we must be careful how we take it. Now, this is important. Very important. In 1 Corinthians 11:29, it refers to taking communion in an unworthy manner, not discerning the Lord's body. To discern, means to recognize, to see something. If you discern the Lord's body, this means that you recognize the cup of wine and the broken bread, that it is Christ, and that by eating this bread and drinking this wine, you are becoming part of Christ. If you cannot see Christ in the elements of communion, then you are not discerning Christ in them. If you eat the bread and wine of communion without the knowledge of becoming part of the body of Christ, then what you are doing is taking the body and blood of Christ for purposes of the flesh rather than for purposes of salvation. If you eat for the purpose of living in Christ, then this is good. If you partake of the bread and wine without recognizing it as Christ's body, then you are automatically judging yourself as guilty of his body and blood.

You see, if you don't believe in the salvation of Christ through his blood, and you don't believe in becoming part of his body by the taking of communion, then what you do believe is that the cup of wine and the broken bread are nothing. Without realizing it, without understanding it, you have set yourself apart from the body of Christ by the act of eating and drinking without faith. Therefore, you have condemned yourself. You have, by your act, demonstrated your lack of faith in Christ. And, by demonstrating your lack of faith in Christ, you have accepted the judgment of God against you, for you have not become part of Christ, but have chosen to remain outside of Christ. You are on the outside of righteousness, and therefore condemned.

Now, one last thought. If you are in Christ, then you are a member of his body. If you hate other members of his body, then you are taking part in the destruction of the body. When you do this, it is ultimately Christ that you are coming against. When you are a member of the body, it is to your advantage to see that every true member of the body is nurtured, not destroyed. Otherwise, your very own existence could be hindered. If the body is destroyed, and you are a member of the body, then you are destroyed. It is important to love the Lord with all your heart, all your strength, and all your mind, but you cannot refuse to love your neighbor as yourself without destroying yourself. Communion is not only of Jesus Christ, but is also taking your place right along with all the other Christians. Be careful that your communion of the body of Christ doesn't backfire on you.