

Partaking of the Lord's Supper

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We turn in sacred scripture to Luke 22. Luke 22 and we read this in connection with Lord's Day 28 of the Catechism in which we begin our study of the Lord's Supper. So here in Luke 22 we read of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper. This is the night before he was betrayed. We pick it up at verse 7. Verses 1 through 6 give us the history of what happened on the Wednesday of the Passion Week, the week of Jesus' suffering, and starting in verse 7 we read of what happens on the Thursday. We read verses 7 through 20.

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Now verse 20, we're going to look at verse 20 a little bit in the preaching.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

It's on the basis of this passage of scripture and on the basis of many passages that we have the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, as it's found in Lord' Day 28, found on page 16 in the back of the Psalter. Lord's Day 28.

Q. 75. How art thou admonished and assured in the Lord's Supper that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?

A. Thus: That Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, adding these promises: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me; and further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.

Q. 76. What is it then to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ?

And we'll look at this answer in a little detail in the preaching as well.

A. It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal; but also, besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; and that we live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.

Q. 77. Where has Christ promised that He will as certainly feed and nourish believers with His body and blood, as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the supper, which is thus expressed: The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying: this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. This promise is repeated by the holy apostle Paul, where he says: 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; because we are all partakers of that one bread.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are two sacraments which Christ, the Lord and King of his church, has given his church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the last two Lord's Days you've looked at the sacrament of baptism. This morning we begin now the study of the Lord's Supper. And by way of introduction, I want to set forth how baptism and Lord's Supper fit with each other and how they work together and how they are to be distinguished from each other, because although baptism and Lord's Supper are very similar in important respects, they are also unique.

First of all, baptism, a little bit of review. In the sacrament of baptism, Christ commands his church to apply water to believers and their seed in the name of the Triune God. That's what baptism is, applying water to believers and their seed in the name of the Triune God. And in that very activity of baptism, the sacrament of baptism is a sign and seal to us that our sins have been washed away by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the sins of our infant children, our covenant children, are washed away by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a sign and seal, then, that God has established a covenant of grace with his people, with us and our children, and he receives us as his children on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Baptism, then we could say, is the sacrament of initiation. Baptism is a sign and seal of being brought into the body of Jesus Christ, being incorporated into Jesus Christ, and being brought into this relationship of friendship, the covenant that God has being brought into that covenant through Jesus Christ. This is also why baptism with water only happens once, because you're brought into that covenant of grace with God only once, because it's an eternal and unchanging, unbreakable covenant of grace. That's baptism.

This morning we turn to a study of the second sacrament that Christ has given his church, the Lord's Supper. And the Lord's Supper is different from baptism in a few respects. In the Lord's Supper, instead of commanding his church to apply water to believers and their seed, Christ commands his church now to eat bread and to drink wine and to have a supper in remembrance of him. That's the Lord's Supper. And in this activity of eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper, we have a sign and seal of the spiritual nourishment our souls continue to receive through Jesus Christ. Eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal that we continue to enjoy this relationship of friendship, we continue to have this covenant relationship with God, and God continues to supply all our spiritual needs. And so while baptism is the sacrament that signifies our entrance into God's covenant, the Lord's Supper is the sacrament that signifies our continued enjoyment of that covenant relationship. That's why, although we are baptized only once, we enjoy the Lord's Supper regularly because we enjoy fellowship with God regularly, continually. This is also why while in baptism we are entirely passive and water is sprinkled on us, in the Lord's Supper we are very much active because it signifies our ongoing communion and our active participation within God's covenant. We live in Christ. We feed on Christ and we grow up more and more unto Christ.

That's the Lord's Supper, different from baptism and yet while they are different in certain respects, they are the same in the fact that they both emphasize that the whole of our salvation depends upon the one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross. In their own unique way, baptism and the Lord's Supper point us to Christ and his death on the cross as the only ground of our salvation. And then, in their own unique way, they tell us how we benefit from Christ's work of salvation.

Well, there are many different aspects of the Lord's Supper that we could study. The Catechism itself is going to take three lengthy Lord's Days to explain the Lord's Supper. This morning we're going to take a general approach and make sure we have a right understanding of what the sacrament is, and especially this morning what we are doing as we partake of the Lord's Supper. And we can summarize what we are doing in three points. First, we are remembering; second, we are eating; and third, we are fellowshiping, and those are the three points of the sermon this morning. We take as our theme, "Partaking of the Lord's Supper," and we look at three things, we see that this partaking is an act of remembering, an act of eating, and an act of fellowshiping.

What is the Lord's Supper? First of all, it is an act of remembering. Now we need to be clear it's much more than just an act of remembering, it's much more than just a memorial, that's what the Baptists would say, it's just a memorial. No, it's more than that, but it's not less than that. In the Lord's Supper, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember what Jesus did for us when he offered himself on the cross for our sins. That the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance is clear from the scripture passage we read, Luke 22. In Luke 22, Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples the night before his crucifixion, and it's the time to celebrate the Passover feast, and just as every other family in Jerusalem was gathered to gather to eat the Passover meal, so also Jesus and his disciples gathered in the upper room to celebrate and eat the Passover meal. And immediately after Jesus and his disciples finish eating the Passover meal, Jesus takes the bread that's still on the table and he gives thanks, and he breaks the bread, and he gives it to his disciples and he says, "This is my body which is broken for you." And then he says, "This do in remembrance of me."

That's the occasion in which Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper and in the very words of the institution, Jesus tells us that the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance. In fact, we can even make the comparison between the Lord's Supper and the Passover meal and say that the Lord's Supper is every bit as much an act of remembrance as the Passover meal was an act of remembrance. The Passover meal itself was an act of remembering. In the Passover feast, God's people remembered and celebrated the marvelous deliverance that God had wrought for them when he delivered them out of Egyptian slavery. Every year at the feast of Passover, as the people offered a lamb at the temple, they would also remember that many years ago there was the lamb that was slain for them and their forefathers that was slain, and the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts, and that blood of the lamb was, in a sense, what saved them on that famous night when the angel of the Lord passed over their houses and slew the firstborn in those houses that did not have the blood on the doorposts. The people at the Passover feast would eat bitter herbs to

remember the bitter years of slavery in Egypt, and the people would eat unleavened bread to symbolize and to remember the hasty departure that they made when they left Egypt.

The Passover feast itself was emphatically a feast of remembrance, and now immediately after celebrating the Passover feast when Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, he says, "Now this is what you will do in remembrance of me." And so I think we can understand the language there and the emphasis and the idea. The Passover itself was only a type, and Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was only a type, a picture of a greater deliverance, that deliverance from death and sin through the great Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. And in harmony with that, the Passover meal itself was an Old Testament ceremony that would be replaced with a greater New Testament sacrament. And that's what Jesus is doing here in the institution of the Lord's Supper. He institutes the Lord's Supper as the fulfillment and replacement of the Old Testament Passover feast. And so when Jesus says, "This do in remembrance of me," what Jesus is saying is this, "Just as the church in the Old Testament was always remembering that great deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so now the church of the New Testament must always remember the greater deliverance, the great deliverance from sin and misery that God gives his people through me, the Christ." Through Jesus' shed blood all our sins have been forgiven and we are made partakers of eternal life. We are set free from the tyranny of sin. And we must remember these realities, we must remember these realities no longer by keeping the Passover feast, but by the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

So when we come to the Lord's Supper, what do we remember? We remember that Jesus' body was broken and his blood was shed for a complete remission, a complete putting away of all our sins. We see the bread being broken before our eyes, we see the wine being poured out into that cup, and seeing both those actions we remember Jesus' body was broken, Jesus' blood was poured out as a sacrifice to blot out all my sins. That's what we remember. So partaking of the Lord's Supper involves an act of remembering. We understand that. We know that. We celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently. But we can go a little further in explaining what we remember at the Lord's Supper. We don't often think about it but the reality is at the Lord's Supper we remember even more and that comes out when we Jesus says in Luke 22:20, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you." When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we're not only celebrating the forgiveness of sins but when we put it all together and we look at the broad picture, we also celebrate and remember the fact that we've been brought into the New Testament time period. Jesus says, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood," and that word testament means covenant. What Jesus is saying is this, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you." Jesus says that in pouring out his blood he is establishing the new covenant. That's what we remember at the Lord's Supper.

Now what does that mean? Now to understand what that means, we first need to start with the old covenant. The old covenant or the Old Testament was the covenant that God established with his people in the Old Testament time period, Old Testament history, first with Adam and then with Noah and then especially with Abraham and then also especially with Moses. And whenever God established his covenant with his people in the Old Testament, there was always the shedding of blood involved. For example,

Genesis 15, when God spoke his covenant promises to Abraham that Abraham would be given the land of Canaan, what did God do? God commanded Abraham to kill a heifer and to kill a goat and a ram and a turtledove and a young pigeon, and then you remember, God himself passed through those dead animals all alone emphasizing that God would rather pass through death than break his covenant promise to Abraham.

So the point is there's shedding of blood involved in God's covenant, in the establishing of it. Furthermore in Genesis 17, when God spoke his promises to Abraham that his covenant wouldn't just be with Abraham, but with Abraham's seed, what did God command? God said, "Abraham, your sons need to be circumcised," and that involved the shedding of blood. And in Exodus 24 when God established his covenant with his people through Moses at Mount Sinai, you have a very striking passage in Exodus 24 on the day when the covenant was confirmed with God's people, Moses built an altar and he sacrificed animals, and he took half the blood of the animals and he sprinkled it on the altar, and the other half of the blood he took with him to the people and he sprinkled that blood on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you." That was the blood of the old covenant, the covenant that the Lord had established with his people at Mount Sinai when he gave them the 10 Commandments. That's the blood of the old covenant and that blood was so necessary because it was only through the blood of the animals that the people could stand in a covenant relationship with God. The point was, "Blood needs to be shed. You are sinners who deserve to die. Blood is a picture of death and dying, and it's only by way of a substitute dying in your place, having their blood shed for you that you are forgiven your sins and my mercy and love can be upon you, and I can have this relationship of friendship with you."

Now that's the old covenant. Now already in the Old Testament, God's people were taught to look forward to the coming of the new covenant. Jeremiah 31:31 uses striking language, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." A new covenant. And in the following verses God explains what this new covenant will look like. "this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." In the new covenant God's people will enjoy forgiveness of sins, they will enjoy regeneration and the rich experience of intimate communion and fellowship with God. His law is written on their hearts.

Now, that's not to say that God's people in the old covenant didn't have this in the Old Testament, but in the new covenant these realities will be raised to a higher level, be enjoyed more fully and more deeply, and that will come through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And now here in Luke 22:20, Jesus holds up the cup and he says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," and what Jesus is saying is this, "Just as the covenant in the days of Moses was established through the shedding of blood, and in the days of Abraham, and in the days of Noah, and in the days of Adam, and throughout the whole

testament, so my blood will be shed and my body will be broken for the establishing and the realization and the enjoyment of the new covenant." And that's what he means by that phrase "in my blood. The covenant, this cup is the new covenant, New Testament in my blood. In my blood on the basis of my shed blood, I bring you into the New Testament. My shed blood is the blood on which the new covenant is established. This cup which is poured out for you is the New Testament in my blood. This cup of wine represents my blood and it is my blood that will atone for your sins. It is my blood that will be your substitute. My death, that will be your substitute. It is my blood that will gain your salvation. It is my blood that will purchase for you eternal life. And it is my blood that will purchase for you the Holy Spirit. It is my blood that will be the blood of the new covenant in which you will enjoy communion with the Lord. This cup represents my blood by which all the blessings of the new covenant are obtained." And then Jesus says, "Drink it. Drink it." In a sense, "Drink my blood. Drink this cup of wine, partake of it as a sign and seal that you are also partakers, spiritual partakers, of all these riches that my blood will purchase for you on the cross."

Now, the whole point of going into all of this is to emphasize this: that's what we are remembering in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an act of remembering. We remember that Jesus' body was broken and his blood was poured out and through that broken body and through that poured out blood, we have the forgiveness of sins, we have eternal life, yes, and we have the reality of all those things which were only typified in the Old Testament. And just as the Old Testament saints remembered the great deliverance that God gave them when he delivered them out of Egyptian slavery and when he established his covenant with them at Mount Sinai, so New Testament saints remember the great deliverance God gives his people when he brings us out of the age of types and shadows and he fulfills them all by giving us The Substitute that was being pointed to by all those Old Testament types and he brings us into the age of enjoying the full reality.

You see, the church is no longer in the Old Testament. At the Lord's Supper we don't just remember Jesus' death on the cross but at the Lord's Supper we remember everything. We remember his incarnation, coming in our flesh to die on the cross. We remember all his sufferings. Yes, we remember his death on the cross, but then we can also add we also remember his resurrection and his ascension, and we remember his pouring out of his Holy Spirit, and we remember and we celebrate all of it. We celebrate the new covenant Christ has brought us into through his blood and all the blessings we enjoy in the new covenant. All the types and shadows of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That's what the Lord's Supper is for. And then the symbolism in the Lord's Supper, the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine is meant to have us think and remember of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. 1 Corinthians 11:26 puts it this way, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." You are remembering everything that Jesus accomplished for you through his earthly life and his death and resurrection.

Now as a very brief tangent, we should make this point: this is what Christ commands us to do, Christ commands us to remember him and everything that he has done for us

through the administration of the Lord's Supper and by coming to the Lord's Supper when it is administered. And if you are a mature believer, able to understand the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, you know what Christ has done and you are able to discern Christ's presence, his body at the Lord's Supper. This is something you are commanded to do, remember Christ and his death on the cross in this way.

So when we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is an act of remembering the Lord's death till he comes, and it's an act of remembering everything that Christ accomplished for us. Through his work on the cross he's brought us into the new eternal covenant of grace. But of course, partaking of the Lord's Supper is not just an act of remembering. It's more, it's also, in the second place, an act of eating. An act of eating and drinking, and that too is the command of Christ. It's not enough that we merely watch the Lord's Supper and remember. No, Christ commands us to come, and he commands us eat and drink.

This is one of the peculiar things about the Lord's Supper, that we eat bread and we drink wine. This is why bread and wine are used. This is how the Lord's Supper is different than baptism. In baptism you don't have a cup and drink a cup of water, no, you have water applied to your body. It's picturing washing away of your sins, your filth. There's meaning in that. And just so in the Lord's Supper we don't take the bread and break the bread into little crumbs and then sprinkle crumbs of bread on ourselves, neither do we have a bowl of wine and get baptized with wine. No, but we eat the bread and we drink the wine because there's meaning in that too because the point is, bread doesn't do you any good, and wine doesn't do you any good if you just sit at it and look at it. If anything, if you just sit and look at the bread, you should become more hungry. And wine doesn't give you joy if you just sit and look at the wine, you need to drink it, that's how you get the joy. That's how you receive nourishment and joy from the bread and wine, by eating and drinking.

Well, just as our bodies need bread and wine for nourishment and for joy, just as our bodies need physical and nourishment, just so our souls and our spiritual lives need spiritual nourishment, spiritual bread and wine, if you will. And what is that spiritual nourishment? Jesus Christ and all the life and the spiritual vitality and the nourishment that's found in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the bread of life. He is that spiritual nourishment for our souls. And one passage that really emphasizes this idea is John 6. In John 6 maybe young people are familiar with it, Jesus uses very strong language there so that even when he's done, many of the people walk away from him because they're offended at the language. In John 6:53, Jesus says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." In the next verse Jesus says, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." And then two verses later he says, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." And now that's strong language, eating his flesh, drinking his blood. And what's even more interesting is the fact that there in John 6 when he speaks that way, Jesus isn't even talking about the Lord's Supper. In fact, the Lord's Supper hasn't been instituted yet for another year or so. The Lord's Supper doesn't exist, but that's still how Jesus is talking and the point is this is what everyone needs to do; for a person to have eternal life, he needs to eat Jesus and drink Jesus.

Except a person eats the flesh of the son of Man and drinks his blood, that man hath no life in him and that's true for all of us. And now the important question comes, "Well, how do you do that? How do you eat Jesus Christ? How do you drink Jesus Christ?" And the simple answer is by believing. By faith. That's the reality. By the activity of faith. The Belgic Confession uses this language, "Faith is the hand and the mouth of the soul by which we partake of Christ." Believing, coming to Jesus, resting in Christ, finding our strength in him, believing, that's the activity of eating and drinking, taking Christ to ourselves by the hand and mouth of faith. And the reality is, beloved, you do this every day when you're in the scriptures, in your devotions. This is what we do in the preaching as Christ comes to us on the platter of the preaching of the word, and we take him to ourselves through faith. And now when we look at the Lord's Supper, it's the same thing. At the Lord's Supper we have a sacrament in which Jesus is pleased to use bread and wine. He's set apart ordinary bread and ordinary wine for this special holy use that by this bread and wine our souls might be directed to him and what he has done, and then through the bread and wine, Jesus not only causes us to remember his suffering and death, but through the bread and wine and through the exercise of faith, Jesus is pleased to feed us spiritually. As we eat the bread and drink the wine. Jesus is pleased to quicken our faith and direct our attention towards him, and we're called to exercise our faith and think upon him. And as Jesus uses the bread and wine to direct our thoughts towards him, and as Jesus uses the activity of eating and drinking the bread and wine to direct our thoughts towards him, Jesus also gives himself to us so that by faith we eat and drink Jesus at the Lord's Supper. He's promised that. That's what's special about the Lord's Supper. He says, "I promise to feed you and nourish you this way."

Now we might say that's still a little difficult to understand, eating and drinking Jesus. But Question and Answer 76 of the Catechism puts it in a detailed and rather straightforward manner. Let's look at that, Question and Answer. 76 "What is it then to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ?" Answer right away emphasizing faith, the activity of faith. "It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal." That's the first thing. Let's stop there. By faith we embrace Jesus in all his sufferings and death on the cross as done for us and knowing, having that confidence, that's what faith is, knowing and having that confidence that Jesus' body was broken and his blood was shed for us, we know that all our sins are blotted out and we are righteous in God's sight and heirs of eternal life and we obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal.

That's what it means to eat the crucified body of Jesus Christ. By faith, we take Christ to ourselves more and more. Through the Lord's Supper Jesus quickens our faith so that through faith, taking Christ to ourselves, we are confirmed and strengthened in the assurance that Christ has made a full atonement for all our sins. Then the Catechism continues, "but also, besides that," so what does it mean to eat and drink Christ, "but also besides that to become more and more united to His sacred body by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone," and that's the second thing. By faith, by eating and drinking Jesus Christ by faith, taking him to ourselves we are

more and more united to him. Just as when you eat bread and wine and that bread and wine enters your body and it becomes one with your body, and it nourishes your body, and you're built up and you're made stronger, and that you're invigorated and your heart is made glad, just so when we at the Lord's Supper by faith, eat and drink, Jesus Christ, Christ enters our soul, he dwells in us more richly, and he nourishes our souls so that our souls are spiritually strengthened and nourished, and our souls are made glad as we grow spiritually.

So there's a parallel, you see, between the physical eating and drinking and the spiritual eating and drinking. That's also what the last part of Answer 75 says, "and further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ." As I eat the bread and wine, so also by faith I'm taking Christ to myself. That's what you need to be doing, starts eating the bread, but we are directed on high to where Christ sits at God's right hand and we take him to ourselves as our faith is quickened by the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine. And the result, then, is that I grow in my relationship with Jesus. I grow more intimate with Jesus. I grow up into Christ.

And then that leads us into the last thing in Answer 76, "and that we live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul." That's the third thing. By faith, eating and drinking Jesus Christ, I not only grow in my relationship with Christ, but growing into Christ I grow in sanctification. I live a more holy life. I grow more devoted to Christ and I'm ruled more and more by his Spirit. So the Lord's Supper, it's a means of grace in that way too, an instrument by which I spiritually grow stronger and am equipped to live a more holy life.

So that's what it means to eat Jesus Christ. I believe more and more my sins are forgiven because I have more and more of Christ, and in him I have that forgiveness. I enjoy more and more this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and I live more and more a pure and holy life. And this eating and drinking happens all the time. Again, it happens in your devotions. It happens through the preaching. Right now you are eating and taking Jesus to yourself. You see him as your meat and drink. And the point is, Jesus commands us to come to the Lord's Supper so that we might also eat and drink Jesus there. That's one place where Christ commands us to be spiritually fed and refreshed. You want to be strong in your faith? You want that strength to fight against the wiles of the devil? Come to the Lord's Supper and certainly come to the preaching of the word. But come, you're commanded to come to the Lord's Supper. Christ would have you be strong in your faith.

Now from all of what has been said, it should be plain that the Lord's Supper is only for believers. The Lord's Supper is for hungry and thirsty souls. The Lord's Supper is not there to try to convert an unbeliever. The unbeliever has the preaching, the preaching of the gospel and the preaching of Christ promiscuously. The Lord's Supper is not to be used to try to convert an unbeliever. In fact, the Lord's Supper is not even for believers who are walking impenitently in sin because the reality is this: in the way of sin, you cannot and you will not enjoy fellowship with Jesus and you will not, Christ will not give

you that admonition and assurance that you are a partaker of the one sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. And the Lord's Supper proves it. You walk in sin and you are barred. You walk impenitently in sin and you are barred from fellowshiping with Jesus. That's a reality, and that reality is reflected in the way the sacraments are administered. But for those who are admitted to the Lord's Supper in the way of a holy confession and holy walk, they receive that admonition and that assurance that they are indeed a partaker of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.

So when we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is an act of remembering, remembering his sacrifice, remembering what we have in the New Testament, all the blessings of salvation, and it's an act of eating and drinking, eating and drinking the bread and wine, eating and drinking Jesus Christ by faith. Finally, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is also an act of fellowshiping. After all, we're sitting at a table and where else do you fellowship but at the kitchen table around a meal? And now at this table, who else is sitting at the head of the table but Jesus Christ himself?

That's exactly how it was when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper. It was a time of fellowship. In fact, in Luke 22:15 Jesus says, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Jesus says, "I want to fellowship with you in this way, having a meal with you." And then after Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, what does he proceed to do? He proceeds to fellowship with his disciples for I presume a few hours. John chapters 14, 15, 16, 17, spending all that time comforting them, praying with them, and for them, singing a few psalms until it's the middle of the night and they go out to the garden of Gethsemane.

The Lord's Supper is an act of fellowship, an act of fellowshiping with Jesus, and then of course with Jesus it's an active fellowshiping with all the other members of the church. We're all so different, coming from different backgrounds, and yet as believers we're all one in Christ and that comes to expression at the Lord's Supper. We're all needy sinners who need the blood of the Lamb, and we're all partakers of Jesus Christ. We're all partakers of that one life, and we're all dependent upon and nourished by that one life of Christ. We're all governed by one spirit. And we're all pursuing the same life of holiness. And we come to the Lord's Supper for that too, together that we might grow in godliness serving the Lord. You see, coming to the Lord's Supper is never an independent activity. It's never just about me, although I do need it, but we come as a family. We come as brothers and sisters to fellowship with our elder brother who's sitting at the head, and ultimately to fellowship with our heavenly Father.

The Lord's Supper is an act of fellowshiping. This is the blessedness of coming to the Lord's Supper, our weak faith is strengthened, we're fed and refreshed unto eternal life, and we are sanctified to live more holy lives, and the bonds that unite us in Christ are strengthened. And again in closing, this is how we are delivered from our sin and misery. This is where we are in the Catechism. We're in the second section, how Jesus delivers us from our sin and misery. He's made the atonement. He's given us a true faith. He's worked that faith in us by the preaching. And now how does he confirm and strengthen that faith so that we are preserved and we grow in this deliverance and we enjoy it more

and more? Through baptism and through the Lord's Supper. May our faith be strengthened even this morning under the preaching as we look at the provision God has made for the strengthening of our faith and the preservation of us as his people. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank thee for the blessings that thou hast bestowed upon us. We thank thee for the preaching. We thank thee for the sacraments, and we thank thee for this study this morning that we might understand better what thou art doing for us and in us through the Lord's Supper. Lord, may our faith be strengthened, may we be refreshed, may we see thy love for us in the covenant that thou hast established with us that thou dost take care to preserve us in that relationship thou hast established. It is all of thee, Lord, to thee be the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.