

Some of you may perhaps never have seen these little cups with both bread and wine. So that there are no ugly mishaps, let me begin with a small word of instruction. There is a thin film on top. If you pull off that film, you will have access to the bread. If you pull off the stronger thicker leaver, you will have access to the wine. Be careful not to do it over your skirt or your trousers. All right. This is simply a way that many churches have in various parts of the world to make the distribution of the elements a little simpler in a large crowd.

Hear the holy scriptures. In the following directives, I have no praise for you. For your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat. For when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers.

As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter. It's hard to know exactly what was going on, but you must remember that in the Roman world, they operated on a 10-day week. Christians nevertheless observed the first day of a Jewish 7-day week for the day of resurrection. That meant that most Christians had to work on Sunday, which meant that Christian services were either early in the morning or late at night.

For those who were well-to-do, they could come early for a whole meal together. They could bring prawn sandwiches. They could have lots of good food and come with spirit, a bottle. Then, the trade people would get off and they would show up a little later, 6:00, 6:30, 7:00. They would bring their chicken sandwiches and not much more. Then, the slaves would eventually get off, but they had to put the children to bed. Maybe it was 8:00 by the time they showed up or maybe even a little later.

Then, when the church was all gathered together, some having fed well and some maybe a little high, others at least satisfied, and some well, they were slaves. They couldn't even bring dried bread with them. That would have been stealing from the master. They show up and they're hungry. Now we'll celebrate the Lord's table. "Your meetings do more harm than good," Paul says, "For I receive from the Lord what I also passed on to you." The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

The same way after supper, he took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So, then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ, eat and drink judgement on themselves.

That is why many among you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep. If we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgement. Nevertheless when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world. So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together, it may not result in judgement.

Number one. The Lord's supper symbolises Christian unity. If instead it becomes a point of fundamental difference, the right is being abused. Number two. It is shocking. I don't know how else to say it. It utterly shocking that Jesus felt he had to give us this right. He gives us the right so that we won't forget his death. Isn't that shocking? In the life of the church we have series on the Psalms, and instructions in how to praise, and lessons in Christian counselling, and instruction in how to bring up children. A series on Jeremiah, another series on Leviticus, and an entire Sunday school class on the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

Somehow we can go week after week after week after week where even in church, we haven't focused on Jesus and his death. Knowing how fickle we are, he gives us a right so that again and again and again, at least here, we have to remember that Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Someone has said, "There are more words. No set of four words more disputed in the history of the church than, 'This is my body.'" Surely we can at least agree on this. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

So, that every time we take the elements, we're saying, "Jesus died for me. Jesus shed his blood for me. We do this in remembrance of him." Moreover, this is the seal of the new covenant. Jesus says, "This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the remission of sins." Number four. It is a temporary right. We are to do this until he comes. In glory we will never ever be tempted to forget what brought us there. The marks, the stigmata will still be apparent and we will so be perfected. We will never be allured by the trees of life growing by the side of river flowing from the throne room of God that we will forget the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is a temporary right. It points backward but it also points forward and one day we will need it no more. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for self-examination. The text makes that very clear. Philip Henry, the father of the great commentator, Matthew Henry wrote a book called "How to Prepare for Communion." It's almost unthinkable today. Isn't it? How to prepare for communion. His whole point was that whether you have communion once a year, which was the Scottish model at the time, or four times a year or once a week.

Nevertheless it is supposed to provide us with an opportunity to examine ourselves lest we come into judgement. Because there is something intrinsically and egregiously blasphemous about saying, "I remember Jesus' death," while we're nurturing bitterness. "I remember Jesus' death," when we're addicted to pornography. "I remember Jesus' death," when we're cheating on our income tax. "I remember Jesus' death," when we're greedy. This is a place for repentance, contrition, asking God for forgiveness again. Or else, it is so egregiously blasphemous an act that we are taking on judgement to ourselves.

Before I lead in prayer, let us have some silence where we examine our own hearts and minds and confess our sins before God. If you will not do this, I beg of you for your soul's sake to avoid blasphemy, do not take these elements. If you confess your sins, you will discover him to be faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. These elements point us back to the Christ who is the true bread of life. Let us confess our sins. In truth Lord God we confess our sins both of omission and commission before you.

Things that we should have done that we have not. Things that we have not done that we should have. Sins of pride, sins of foolish talk, sins of unbelief, sins of whining ingratitude, sins of self pity, sins of chronic unbelief in your dear son and his most holy word, sins of cowardice, sins of presumption, sins of an undisciplined



imagination. We who have begun to glimpse the glory and beauty of holiness have no excuse. We come again to the cross knowing that he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

We joyfully sing, "I have no other argument. I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me." As we take this bread and remember that the master himself broke the bread on that night 2,000 years ago and said, "This is my body broken for you." Draw us back to the cross again where we confess our sin and alone receive forgiveness. For Jesus sake. Amen. On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

We bless you merciful God that by the blood of the everlasting covenant, we have been redeemed. His life's blood was poured out. He died. He was crucified that we might have life in him. He became sin. He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Draw us afresh to the wounds which testify to his death on our behalf. For Jesus sake. Amen. After supper on that last night he took the cup and he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the remission of sins." All of you drink of it. After they sang a hymn, they went out. We shall too sing.

