

THE MARKS OF THE
**TRUE
CHURCH**



THE SACRAMENTS: OUR RESPONSIBILITY

(PART 2)

Sunday 16th October 2022

Today's text will cover the following additional scriptures:

- **Hebrews 5:9-14**
- **Hebrews 3:5-19**
- **Hebrews 6:1-2**
- **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**
- **1 Corinthians 3:5-7**
- **1 Corinthians 2:14**

Earlier in this series, the Marks of the True Church were given as:

- 1. Preaching of the Word;**
- 2. Administration of Sacraments; and**
- 3. The Exercising of Church Discipline**

We have also addressed the rights and responsibilities of the sacraments, concluding with the 5 points of grace, which we enjoy as believers in Christ.

Our focus last week was the rights and benefits we enjoy as Christians on the one hand, and the responsibilities that we must fulfil on the other.

For example, as a citizen of the United Kingdom, there are certain rights that you enjoy but you are expected to be a responsible citizen of the United Kingdom.

Some examples of the various rights and benefits of sacraments enjoyed by the Israelites were:

- Manna – spiritual food;
- Covering of the cloud (symbolising the Holy Spirit); and
- The parting of the Red Sea (a type of water baptism).

However, God wasn't pleased with them because they refused to live responsibly.

Here are some of the responsibilities that God expected of the Israelites:

- Living responsibly;
- Not having idols;
- Not following after evil things;
- Not living an immoral life; and
- Not grumbling or testing Jesus Christ.

We can only carry out such responsibilities as we enjoy the grace of God which instructs us!

Titus 2:11-12 tells us that grace is for instruction and training, by instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and teaching us to live godly, soberly and righteously.

Introduction

Today's text will expand further on our responsibilities as children of God who enjoy the rights and benefits of the sacraments.

We will examine issues in two early churches of the Bible – Corinthian and Hebrew – as they relate to our own Christian journey today.

The Issues of the Corinthian Church

The issues of this church were: division, sexual immorality, abuse of the Holy Spirit, and disputes on what they can and cannot eat.

The issue in this church was not unbelief – they enjoyed God's grace, but there was an insufficient living experience of Christ in the Church (**1 Corinthians 3:1-2**).

The members of this church attended services regularly but there was strife among them.

1 Corinthians 2:14 says: "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know [them,] because they are spiritually discerned."

The Corinthian church were soulish and carnal. Even though they had a regenerated spirit, it was dormant because their minds ruled them.

We must learn from the Hebrew and Corinthian churches! (**1 Corinthians 10:6.**)

The Evil Heart of Unbelief

Hebrews 3:19 says: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

The people in this Scripture were baptised and partook of communion, but due to trying times, they started to rebel - not in a visible way - but in their hearts.

Their ‘rebellion’ was in their hearts.

Is it possible that you are harbouring an evil form of unbelief in your heart?

Hebrews 3:1 says that God was angry with that generation of Israelites.

That will not be your portion in Jesus’ name!

Prayer: Lord, I receive grace for you to deal with every area of unbelief.

Hebrews 6:1 says: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [principles] of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,”

Question: What does it mean to be a believer?

Answer: Leaving the elementary principles behind. You shouldn’t have to be sold on the things of Jesus Christ over again.

It is not so much as not coming to church but it is a heart issue.

“Christ saved you from eternal damnation; He will save you continually.” – *Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church Woolwich.*

The church in Hebrews were believers who still had an insufficient understanding of the person of Christ. They partook in the sacraments but it did not stop them from having an evil heart of unbelief.

Sanctified in Christ

When you gave your life to Jesus, you *were* sanctified. Now, as you are in relationship with Christ, He *is* sanctifying you, and when you pass on to eternity, you *will* be sanctified.

Be encouraged that in the midst of trials, Christ is sanctifying you.

“Is it possible that God is using some of the trials you are experiencing to gain you, perfect you, establish you, and settle issues in your life?” – *Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church Woolwich.*

Badge Wearing Members of Christ’s Body

We are badge wearing members of the body of Christ. This means we are baptised, partake of the Holy Communion and never stray in our heart’s attitude towards Him.

“As a badge wearing member of the body of Christ, obedience is a priority.” – *Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church Woolwich.*

***For more context, see Hebrews 3:17-18.**

A Sufficient Understanding of Christ

Is it possible to be born-again and not sufficiently know who Christ is?

This was the issue of the early church in the book of Hebrews. Their partaking of the sacraments did not prevent them/immune them from the evil heart of unbelief!

They had ‘head’ knowledge but no ‘heart’ knowledge/faith in the sacraments they were observing. The Hebrew church did not have a sufficient appreciation and understanding of who Christ is.

“We can be born-again believers and still have an insufficient knowledge of the person of Christ.” – *Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church Woolwich.*

The Hebrew church were in danger of not entering the rest (satisfaction) that God promised, due to their shortage of faith in the all-inclusive Christ revealed in Scriptures. They needed to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Rest!

Psalm 36:8 says: “They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.”

You can be going through issues and still not be perturbed. Even under attack, we should be at rest, and remember that we have a Saviour.

Bring your troubles to Jesus and watch Him give you rest!

It is our responsibility to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; we do this by having faith. Put your faith in the word of God and let it settle all matters.

Apply the word of God to the difficult situations of life.

Hebrews 3:6 says: “But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

Note the words, ***‘But Christ’***.

Jesus is the Son of His house. This is not a physical house made of bricks and mortar; this is us!

We can hold onto the fact that Jesus is the Son over us, the house, despite all that is happening in the world around us.

Do Not Suffer Loss!

1 Corinthians 3:15-17 says: If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and [that] the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which [temple] you are."

The church in Corinth hadn't enjoyed the sufficient life of Christ and were in danger of suffering loss.

For this not to be our reality, we must discuss the things that would cause us to suffer loss. This is expanded further, below.

The Importance of Church Discipline

If we, as a church, harbour immorality and 'brush things under the carpet', there will be consequences - which are seen in the example of the Corinthian church!

Church discipline is for those who are badge wearing members of the body of Christ, so that we will not suffer loss.

The church in Corinth needed to grow in grace, because this would cause them to grow in the life of God, in Christ, applied by the Holy Spirit (see **2 Peter 3:18**).

As a result, it is your responsibility to experience growth in life, as you receive the grace that perfects you. It is also your responsibility to enjoy grace.

The Importance of Sacraments

“Sacraments are symbolic representations of an inward reality.” – *Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church, Woolwich.*

The sacraments in themselves are not grace, they only convey a message of grace.

The grace that the sacraments convey must be received by faith in Christ Jesus, based on Scripture!

Luke 22:19-20 says: “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke [it,] and gave [it] to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**” Likewise He also [took] the cup after supper, saying, “This cup [is] the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”

Here we read the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, commanding us to do this!

Jesus is instituting this sacrament by bringing Christ to the forefront.

1 Corinthians 11:26 says: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”

In **Luke 22:19-20**, Paul was quoting Jesus, whereas in **1 Corinthians 11:26**, Paul was adding a commentary on what happens when we partake of the Lord’s table.

*In **1 Corinthians 11:26**, we read the words of Apostle Paul, telling us what we really do when we partake of the Lord’s table.*

Proclaiming the Lord’s Death

When you ‘proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes’, you make a statement in your heart, yourself, and the world, concerning the death of Jesus Christ.

It is your responsibility to proclaim the Lord's death as a statement of faith that imparts grace.

The proclamation of the Lord's death is for:

- i. **Oneself** - for the receiving the conveyed **grace** by **faith** in **Christ** according to **scriptures** for the glory of **God**.
- ii. **Others** - for the propagation of the good news to the unsaved and the saved! Everyone needs the Gospel. The saved also need the Gospel, because there is an evil one that is trying to take you away from your own steadfastness.

4 Aspects of the Lord's Death:

1. **The Lord's loving death for humanity** - **John 3:16** says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Whenever you come to the Lord's Table, you proclaim and respond to the love that God has for you.

2. **The Lord's ransom death for humanity** - **1 Timothy 2:5-6** says: "For [there is] one God and one Mediator between God and men, [the] Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,"

The only reason why you need a mediator is if there is an issue between two parties. We offended a righteous and infinitely holy God, and there was a price to pay.

Hence, Jesus Christ gave Himself as a ransom for us, paying the price that we could never pay.

What you enjoy is because Christ paid the price.

3. The Lord's victorious death for humanity - Hebrews 2:14-15 says:

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

The day Christ died on the cross, the power of the devil was lost.

Whenever you carry the bread and the cup, remember the victory that Christ has paid for you.

“Don't fear death, step out in faith and do what Christ has called you to do!” –
Pastor Kola Taiwo, New Wine Church Woolwich.

4. The Lord's vicarious (penal) death for humanity - Romans 5:8 (NKJV):

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

This means that Christ took our place. There had to be a remission for sins, so Christ took the penalty of our sins, past, present, and future.

The bread and the cup represents a penal substitution; Christ, the Son of God, took the wrath of God upon Himself so that we can go free.

The **Hebrew church** needed to be reminded of the Lord's death (all four aspects) as promised in Scriptures so as to become mature and handle the “**word of righteousness**” in times of extreme challenges.

Likewise, we need to be reminded every time of all the four aspects of the Lord's death and the grace it conveys to us!

Our Response:

2 Timothy 2:1 says: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

In this Scripture, Timothy was about to give up; he was doubting himself and battling discouragement as a young pastor, and was unsettled upon hearing that his mentor, Paul the apostle, was in prison.

However, Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong, despite the issues he was facing.

In your time of prayer, remember what God said to Timothy.

Lastly...

Be encouraged that by the grace of God, we can fulfill our responsibilities as badge-wearing members of the body of Christ!