

“THE SACRED ELEMENTS”

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NKJV)

This morning I would like for us to consider the sacred elements of Holy Communion, the loaf of bread and the cup of wine. They are so distinctively Christian that a depiction of a loaf of bread and a wine cup together mean "Christian" as surely as a depiction of the cross.

Let us see that the cup of wine and the loaf of bread represent the sufferings of Christ, the consolations of Christ, and the community of Christ's Body the Church.

1.) The Sufferings of Christ

The way a loaf of bread is made is illustrative of the sufferings of Christ. The wheat is cut down in the field, its life ended by the blade. Then it is beaten to separate the grain from the straw. The grain is sifted and shaken to loosen the kernel from the bran. Then the grain of wheat is ground into flour. The flour is then mixed with water or some other liquid, other ingredients may be added. It is now a lump of dough. Several times after the dough begins to rise it is pummeled and kneaded. Finally, it is put into a fiery hot oven. When it is taken from the oven, it is a loaf of bread.

It does not take a whole lot of imagination to see the picture of Christ's sufferings in this. He was cut down in the prime of His life.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5 NKJV)

Grapes are cut from the vine in clusters, plucked off and put into a vat where they are crushed. All of the juice of life is squeezed from them and separated from the skins, the seeds, and the pulp. Then the wine is aged in casks in darkness (like in a tomb) until its time is ready.

Several times in the Old Testament prophecies and again in the Revelation we read of the wine of God's wrath. It was the wine of God's wrath which Jesus drank to its bitter dregs on the cross.

For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them." Then I took the cup from the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the LORD had sent me: (Jeremiah 25:15-17 NKJV)

And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." (Mark 14:36 NKJV)

2.) The Consolations of Christ

Doctors refer to certain foods, including bread and wine, as "comfort foods."

And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man's heart. (Psalms 104:15 NKJV)

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. (1 Timothy 5:23 NKJV)

Throughout the Old Testament there are commands to share bread with the poor, to relieve the hungry by giving them bread. Two of Jesus' great miracles were the feeding of the 5,000 and then the feeding of the 4,000 with bread and fish until everyone was satisfied and there were basketsful left over.

In the prayer which Jesus taught, we are not to ask for daily bread for ourselves as individuals but "Give US this day our daily bread..." How many people do you include in US when you pray?

In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, when the Samaritan came upon this man who had been beaten and had wounds on his body, the Samaritan poured wine and oil on the wounds before binding them.

The bread and wine remind us of Jesus ministering to the broken-hearted, the hungry, the wounded. He left us here to continue His ministry of compassion.

3.) The Body of Christ is the Community of Believers.

There is only one body of Christ and we are all individual parts of the one body. There is not a rice cake for Asians, a corn bread for Hispanics, dark bread for colored people and white bread for us. There is only one loaf. There was an article in the paper yesterday about a company in Fordyce that makes pews, pulpits, communion tables for churches. One church ordered furniture from them but then specified that they send no black workers when they installed the furniture. The body of Christ is twelve grain bread and the different kinds of grains are not kept separate when they are mixed into the dough.

Likewise, the wine, which is the blood of Christ is not made in separate cups. It is made in a vat where all of the grapes are dumped together, trodden and pressed, and then poured into the barrel to age.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

(1 Corinthians 12:12-20 NKJV)