

## Communion – Healing and the Atonement

When we approach the “Lord’s Table” and partake of communion we are reminded that the provision of healing is integral to the atonement.

We partake of two elements, the body and the blood; the bread and the cup.

1. His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sin.

Eph 1:7 ... *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses”.*

2. His body was broken, carrying away our sin, sickness and diseases, so that we in return may receive His abundant life including the provision of healing.

Jesus linked the bread to physical healing and deliverance in His comment to the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) when she asked Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

Mark 7:27 ... *“it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”.*

The “children” were the Jews the “dogs” were the gentiles. The “bread” referred to the healing she was asking Jesus for, for her daughter. Demon possession or oppression and sickness are alike in that they are the consequence of sin. So Jesus classifies them and treats them as one and the same, as explained in Acts 10:38 where it says of Jesus that ... *“He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil”.*

The bread is Christ’s body and is the provision for our healing.

The meat of the Passover lamb (Ex 12) was for the health and strength of the Israelites as they went on their journey to the Promised Land. This is a type and shadow of Christ’s body which was broken and given for our health and wellbeing in our journey as His ambassadors. The bread is symbolic of His body which is the provision for us to live healthy, strong lives.

Now with the understanding that we have redemption through Christ’s blood, the forgiveness of our sins and that His body was broken that we might be whole and walk in health, let us look into the reason for illness amongst many believers.

1 Cor 11:20-34 NKJV ... *“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.*

*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.*

*Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep**". For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

*Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment".*

Note in verse 30 Paul doesn't say for **these** reasons, he says ... *"for **this** reason many are weak and sick"*. That singular reason was the failure by believers to correctly discern the Lord's body (The Lord's body is speaking of the body of believers who constitute the church). What does that mean?

While we do well to examine our lives, confess and ask for forgiveness of sin, and ensure that we are walking in the light, and particularly when we are before the Lord at his table, contrary to popular teaching in some circles, which teaches that "eating in an unworthy manner" and "examining oneself" means we are to see if we have sin in our lives and to confess our sin before we can partake of the Lord's Table, this passage is not talking about personal sin and confession of that sin. Verse 29 shows us that it is the unworthy eating and drinking that brings condemnation upon us. Judgement is linked to the action of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. The eating and drinking which violated the Lord's body – those who were present at the communion meal.

What was happening was that many of the Corinthian believers were treating the Lord's Supper as a reason to have a good feed and get drunk without any consideration for the others around them. They either lacked the understanding of the significance of this celebration and commemoration, or they just did not care, or they treated it in a religious, ritualistic manner without giving thought to what they were doing. They, the Corinthians, were mostly gentiles who did not necessarily have the benefit of knowing the Old Testament scriptures and typology, as the Jewish believers would have had. So possibly they were simply acting in ignorance.

So Paul was not saying that we should not partake of the table if we had some sin problem and were unworthy, rather, he was saying that we should not partake of the table in an unworthy manner. He was saying if you are hungry, eat at home; don't come to the Lord's Table for a meal and to get drunk. He was saying that when you partake of the Lord's Supper you do it to appropriate the provision of healing and to give thanks to the Lord for this sacrificial act of His love in order that we might walk in health and strength, physically as well as spiritually.

The Corinthian believers, by treating the Lord's Supper as a ritual and occasion for a selfish drunken feast, failed to appropriate the blessing of continued health through the provisions of the atonement. Similarly, by teaching people that they cannot come to the Lord's Table if they are "unworthy", false teachers of our modern day have denied many from this blessing of health. We also, if we partake in a ritualistic manner will not walk in health, and in fact open ourselves to being sick as Paul states in verse 30... *"For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep"*.

When we fail to rightly judge, or discern, or give consideration to others of the body of Christ we are despising the atoning work of Christ and insulting His grace. For that reason we open ourselves to sickness. We bring that judgement upon ourselves. That judgement is the divine judgement or sentence that fell upon mankind when Adam sinned. Through sin the sentence of death, including sickness and other malady, befell mankind. So if we do not appropriate the provision of healing through the atonement we will continue to face the consequences of the divine sentence.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians, and us, to examine ourselves and see if we are truly trusting in the work of the cross and taking God at His word that, ... *"this is My body broken for you"* ... for ... *"by Jesus stripes we are healed"*.

Each time we rightly partake of the cup and the bread we acknowledge Christ's provision for our healing and we reverse the effects of the curse and divine sentence in our bodies. Just as the simple act of eating by Adam brought sin, disease and death to us, so God has ordained that the simple act of partaking of the bread would bring health and wholeness to His people.

Let us go for a moment to another passage of scripture that relates to this matter, and then we will come back to the matter of rightly judging or discerning the body.

Numbers 21:4-9 is another passage of scripture which links bodily healing and the atonement. In Numbers 21 we read of the occasion where the Israelites murmured against God and Moses and God sent the fiery serpents in judgement, causing the bitten people to die. God then made provision for their healing so that they would not have to die if they were bitten.

Nu 21:8-9 ... *"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he **looks** at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he **looked** to the bronze serpent, he lived"*.

This passage again links bodily healing and the atonement because the serpent on the standard is a type of Christ on the cross bearing our sin and shame that we may be made whole in spirit, soul and body. However, there is something interesting to note in this passage from Numbers. The word "looks" in verse 8 is from the root word (ראה) *rā'āh* while the word "looked" in verse 9 is from the root word (נבט) *nāvat*.

The word "looks" (*rā'āh*) means to "look, see and understand" and designates the saving, understanding, believing acceptance of the word of God. From this same root comes the word *rō'eh*

which means “seer”, or “prophetic vision”. This is one who sees divine things. This is one who looks not at the things which are seen or temporal, but at the things which are not seen which are established in the eternal. This person “looks” and sees, understands and accepts that what he “sees” is the eternally established truth; the word of God.

The word “looked” (nāvat) means “look, look directly or regard” and designates sustained, favourable contemplation. From the same parent root we get the word “navi” which means prophet. The prophet is the one who makes the outward prophetic declaration or outward announcement of that which he “sees”. First he is the “rō’eh” who “sees” and accepts and embraces the eternal or divinely revealed truth, then he is the “navi” who outwardly prophetically declares as truth the fact that God has revealed to him. And we know that in the course of time anything declared prophetically comes into being!

Now what is the significance of all that? It simply means that God explained to Moses, who would have explained to the people, that if they “look” (rā’āh) at the serpent with the eye of faith and “see” the eternally established truth and understand and believe and accept that God is their healer and that He has made provision for their healing through this symbol on the standard, that they would be healed. Then their “looking” (nāvat) at the fiery serpent was the outward act (the prophetic declaration) of looking directly at the fiery serpent on the pole thereby signifying that they were inwardly believing and accepting God’s provision and were taking that which they saw in the realm of the spirit and outwardly declaring it to be so, with the result that they were healed. That “looking” was their acting outwardly, or their confessing, of what they believed inwardly.

Rom 10: 9-10 ... *“if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation”.*

And that’s exactly what our Lord wants for us to do regarding His provision for our healing. Through His atoning work on the Cross Christ has made the provision for us to be healed and well as saved from our sin. As we “look” (rā’āh) with the eye of faith, looking at the eternal or unseen truth of God’s word concerning His provision, believing and accepting His word, and then act on this by our outward prophetic “looking” (nāvat) or confession and actions, declaring His truth to be so, we will receive and walk in the health he has promised. Remember, in the course of time every prophetic declaration comes into being!

Just as the Israelites “looked” at the fiery serpent on the pole and were healed, so we are to “partake” of the bread and the cup (as outward prophetic declarations) having “seen”, accepted and believed inwardly that His blood was shed for our forgiveness from sin and His body was broken so we might walk in health and strength.

This is what it means to “rightly discern the Lord’s body” and the “partake in a worthy manner”. This is the “remembrance” we enact.

We hear Christ say, ... *“Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for **you**”* ... *“this cup is the new covenant in My blood, shed for **you**”*. We see Him carrying all our sin, sickness, diseases and pain in His

body. We see that our sickness, affliction and diseases He took upon Himself and bore them away never to be seen again, and our pain, sorrows and sufferings He carried in our place. As we partake of the cup and the bread we simply are saying Lord I trust you and in the loving work of grace you carried out on my behalf so that I could be free of sin and the consequences of sin. I place my trust in You and chose to walk in the health you have provided for me. As we partake of the bread and the cup we give thanks to Him and thereby “remember” Him and His loving grace and kindness towards us. We acknowledge that He is our life and our all and walk in His strength. As we do that His mighty power that works within us (Eph 3:20) is released and we walk in health and strength.

Thanks be to Christ and His atoning work, we walk as whole people, in accordance with His original purpose and plan for us!