

## LORD'S DAY 29

78. Q. Are then the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No.  
Just as the water of baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ and is not the washing away of sins itself but is simply God's sign and pledge,<sup>1</sup> so also the bread in the Lord's Supper does not become the body of Christ itself,<sup>2</sup> although it is called Christ's body<sup>3</sup> in keeping with the nature and usage of sacraments.<sup>4</sup>

1. **Ephesians 5:26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

**Titus 3:5** not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

2. **Matthew 26:26-29** And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."<sup>27</sup> Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."<sup>28</sup> "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."<sup>29</sup> "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

3. **1 Corinthians 10:16-17** 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?<sup>17</sup> For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

**1 Corinthians 11:26-28** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

4. **Genesis 17:10-11** This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;<sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

**Exodus 12:11** And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

**Exodus 12:13** Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

**1 Corinthians 10:3-4** all ate the same spiritual food,<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

**1 Peter 3:21** There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

79. Q. Why then does Christ call the bread His body and the cup His blood, or the new covenant in His blood, and why does Paul speak of a participation in the body and blood of Christ?

A. Christ speaks in this way for a good reason: He wants to teach us by His supper that as bread and wine sustain us in this temporal life, so His crucified body and shed blood are true food and drink for our souls to eternal life.<sup>1</sup>  
But, even more important,

He wants to assure us by this visible sign and pledge,  
 first,  
 that through the working of the Holy Spirit  
 we share in His true body and blood  
 as surely as we receive with our mouth  
 these holy signs in remembrance of Him,<sup>2</sup>  
 and, second,  
 that all His suffering and obedience  
 are as certainly ours  
 as if we personally  
 had suffered and paid for our sins.<sup>3</sup>

1. **John 6:51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.  
**John 6:55** For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.
2. **1 Corinthians 10:16-17** 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? <sup>17</sup> For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.  
**1 Corinthians 11:26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.
3. **Romans 6:5-11** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup> For he who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



**W**hen we spoke about baptism, the question was asked, “*Does baptism really wash away sin?*” To this we answered, “*No.*” Now, as we speak about the Lord’s Supper, a similar question is asked: “*Does the bread become the body of Christ, and the wine His blood?*”

The church of Rome answers, “*Yes.*” They teach that the bread is transformed into the body of Christ, and the wine is transformed into the blood of Christ. The wafers (which they use to prevent any crumbs falling to the floor) and the wine are ordinary enough. A bakery makes the wafers, and a winery makes the wine. But they are said to change into Christ’s body and blood.

According to Rome, this happens when the priest repeats the words of Christ, “*This is My body*”<sup>1</sup> and “*This is My blood.*” They believe that the moment these words are

spoken, the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ. This is called **TRANSUBSTANTIATION** (*trans* means across, and *substance* is *what a thing consists of*. The ending *-ation* refers to a process. Thus literally transubstantiation is the process whereby the substance of bread crosses over to become the substance of Christ’s body.)

At the time of the Reformation the Lutherans did not completely rid themselves of this idea. They believed that when Christ ascended into heaven, His human body became a **spiritual body**, which was not limited to one place as our bodies are. They taught that Christ’s body became **omnipresent** (present every-where). Thus they understand the words, “*This is My body*” to mean that Christ is present in and all around the bread, although

1. The Church of Rome continued to conduct its worship services in Latin even though it was not the language of the common people. In Latin the words “This is My body” are “Hoc est meum corpus.” In the ears of the people who did not understand Latin, it sounded like “hocus pocus” from which this latter saying originates.

the bread remains bread. This is called **consubstantiation**. (*Con* means *with*, and substance is what a thing consists of. The ending *-ation* refers to a process. Thus consubstantiation is the process whereby Christ's body comes to be with the bread, in it and around it.)

The Reformed simply took the words of Christ, "*This is My body*" and "*This is My blood*" as a metaphor. (A metaphor is a comparison without using the words *like* or *as*.) Christ used metaphors more often. He said, "*I am the door*" (John 10:7), and "*I am the vine*" (John 15:1). We do not interpret these literally as if Christ is a literal door with hinges and a handle. Neither is He a literal vine with leaves and fruit growing on Him. That is absurd! By using the metaphor of a door Christ simply meant that only through Him could we gain access to the Father. By using the metaphor of the vine, Christ simply meant that we can bear good fruit only when we are grafted into Him by faith. By using the metaphor of the body and blood, Christ simply meant to say, "*This bread is like My body*" and "*This bread represents My body*."

Why did Christ speak in this way? Why didn't He simply say, "*This bread is like My body*"? Or to put it in technical terms, why didn't Christ use a simile (a comparison using the words *like* or *as*)? I would refer you to Lord's Day 27, where a similar question was asked concerning baptism, which the Scripture calls *the washing away of sin*.

The Catechism points out that this way of speaking is in keeping with the nature and usage of the sacraments. As a sign a sacrament is intended to teach, and as a seal it is intended to assure. Concerning the aspect of teaching, our Lord could just as well have said "*This bread is like My body*." By saying this, He would point out that He is the true food and drink to eternal life. That is, His suffering and death can give eternal life, just as bread and wine can sustain our physical life.

Concerning the aspect of assurance, however, our Lord wisely chose to say

"*This is My body*" rather than "*This is like My body*." Technically speaking, a simile may be more accurate, but a metaphor is more powerful. If I wished to assure an artist that the portrait which I asked him to paint of my father is a true reflection, then I could better use a metaphor than a simile. To say, "*That looks like my father*" is not nearly as strong as saying "*That's my father!*" The latter gives the impression of complete identification. Christ called the bread His body in order to assure us that as surely as we partake of this bread, so surely do we partake of His body and blood, through which our sins have been forgiven.

Connected to the Roman error of *transubstantiation* is the error which Rome teaches concerning the way in which we come to share in the benefits of Christ's death. Rome teaches that the benefits of Christ's death are inseparably bound to the transformed bread and wine. Whoever eats the transformed bread and wine actually and automatically shares in the benefits of Christ's death. Rome teaches that a man lays hold of God's grace with his hands and makes it his own by eating and drinking with his mouth.

The Reformed refuted the thought that the grace of God is automatically given through the sacraments. Sitting at the Lord's table and participating in the bread and wine does not automatically mean that we participate in the grace of Christ. The sacraments do not automatically make us partakers of Christ's benefits. We receive God's grace, not with the hands of the body but with the hand of the soul, which is faith. We must accept God's grace with a believing heart. Only by faith do we share in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice.

At the same time we want to stress that the benefit which we receive from using the sacraments, is real. The sacraments, along with the Word of God, are called **means of grace**. The Bible teaches us that God's grace is given to those who have faith. But where does this faith come from? We dealt with this already in Lord's Day 25, where we learned that faith comes "*from the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts through*

*the preaching of the gospel and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments.*" The Word and the sacraments bring us to faith, and faith makes us partakers of grace.

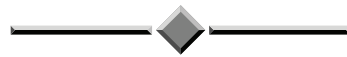
It should be clear that the sacrament is not an automatic instrument, but neither is it a useless one. The Lord's Supper is an instrument of God the Holy Spirit. Sometimes one can hear another say, "I don't get much out of the Lord's Supper. I'd rather listen to a good sermon". But we must not underestimate the working of the Holy Spirit. How much one's faith has been strengthened from the celebration of the Lord's Supper is hard to measure. For the working of the Holy Spirit is not always perceptible. But we must remember that Christ has commanded us to use these sacraments, and believe that through its proper use we will be strengthened in faith.

This leads us to discuss briefly what it means to **use** the Lord's Supper. To **use** this sacrament does not mean simply that we sit at the table and eat and drink. We use this sacrament when we remember its purpose.

If we sit at the Lord's table without paying attention to what is portrayed in all the symbols contained therein, then we may have eaten the bread and drunk the wine, but we have not really used the sacrament. Our mind must be actively tuned to what is portrayed. Even the youth who have not made profession of faith, and who do not actually sit at the table can use this sacrament when they tune their mind to the message that is conveyed in the symbols.

Furthermore, to use this sacrament we must participate with faith, believing all that is promised therein. If we sit at the table without believing in the promise that is conveyed in this sacrament, then we have not used the sacrament. Rather, we have abused it.

If we use the sacrament rightly, faith is strengthened, and through faith we share in the benefits of Christ's death.



#### **Questions:**

1. What does the church of Rome teach concerning the bread and the wine of Holy Supper?
2. When does this occur? What is this called?
3. What did the Lutherans say happened to the body of Christ after His ascension? Where do they believe the body of Christ exists (dwells)?
4. What do the Lutherans confess concerning Christ's body and blood with respect to the bread and wine of Holy Supper? What is this called?
5. Should we interpret Christ's words, "*This is My body*" literally? If not, how should we interpret them?
6. What is a metaphor? What other metaphors did Christ use in His preaching?
7. By using this metaphor, what did Christ mean to say?
8. What is a simile? In what way is a metaphor more powerful than a simile when speaking about the sacraments?
9. According to the church of Rome, what happens when someone eats the transformed bread and wine of Holy Supper?
10. How does Scripture teach us that we become partakers of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice?
11. If the Lord's Supper does not automatically make us partakers of the benefits of Christ, is it then a useless sacrament? Why or why not?
12. What two things are necessary in order to use the sacrament rightly?