

# With This Cup

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*"For as often as ye eat  
this bread, and drink  
this cup, ye do shew the  
Lord's death till he  
come" (I Cor. 11:26).*

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**Holy Communion is not just  
a reminder of a past event  
but a living link to  
Christ and eternity.**

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## Introduction

Holy Communion is essential to the spiritual life of Christians. It is not optional. We are commanded by our Master to receive it. It is no more optional than water baptism. We are told to be baptized in water. Romans 6 says those who are buried with Christ in baptism shall rise with Him in resurrection. Likewise the Scripture says, "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come**" (I Cor. 11:26). **In receiving the Lord's Supper we are carrying out the command of our Lord and Master.**

What is Holy Communion? Most of us have participated in it at some time. Holy Communion is a memorial to the New Covenant, or New Testament, through which we enjoy a new relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He provided this new relationship through His death. Through Holy Communion we recall that Christ died for us and that we have salvation because of His death. He has left us emblems representing His body and His blood. The bread speaks to us of the body of our Lord, broken by the stripes that were inflicted on Him. The cup represents the blood shed by our Lord. It speaks to us of eternal salvation, of redemption through His precious blood.

We frequently hear the ordinance referred to as the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table. These names stress that it is the Lord's and not the exclusive property of any one group or individual. At other times we may call it Holy Communion, because it is a time of communing in a personal, intimate way with our Lord Jesus. By any name, this ordinance is inexorably linked to the death of Christ. It points to the cross. It is a memorial to the One who died, yet is not dead. It points to the grave, yet is intended for those who have eternal victory over the grave.

The Lord's Supper is more than mere form or ritual. It is a source of healing, for it memorializes the stripes by which we are healed. It is a source of fellowship, for in observing it we come into fellowship with others who know Christ as Lord. It is a reminder of the constant union

**we enjoy with the Savior. The Lord's Supper is a grand paradox. It is a memorial to One who needs no memorial. It looks backward at death as a defeated foe, rather than forward to it as a dreaded villain. It points to a broken body and shed blood, yet views death as the beginning of life. The Lord's Supper speaks of death, yet its subject is life. Its bread is the bread of life, its cup the cup of life.**

**In this message I hope to present Holy Communion in a light by which it is seldom illuminated. I hope to show that Communion is not a lifeless picture of events gone by, but a living link to eternal spiritual truth. I hope to illustrate that the Lord's Supper is a doorway into a deeper and richer communion with Christ than most believers realize. It is a memorial; but more than that, it is life.**

## **The Lord's Supper**

**As I have already noted, Holy Communion is more than mere ritual. The celebration of this ordinance places us in direct communication with Christ. It is the most beautiful of the practices of the Christian faith and can become the source of powerful spiritual blessings.**

**In the Scriptures we see two assemblies or churches. The first is described in the Old Testament: the nation of Israel. The second, in the New Testament, is the body of Christ. The Greek word most frequently translated "church" is ecclesia. It can mean "those who are called out." We who have trusted Christ are called-out ones. Both of God's assemblies were called out by miraculous deliverance. Israel was called out of Egypt and brought into the land of promise. The new body has been, and is being, called out of sin and death and brought into union with the Lord Jesus Christ. God celebrated a special feast with both of His assemblies. In the Old Testament there was the Passover. In the New Testament there is Holy Communion. Both are celebrated to help us remember the moment of deliverance.**

## **Nature of the Supper**

**Of what should we be reminded when we consider the Lord's Supper? First, we ought to remember that it is the Lord's Supper, not man's. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, initiated it; it was not born in the hearts of men. It was not instituted by church councils. It is not a ritual that has been added to the church. The Lord's Supper is an original function of the church, one that has been observed from the beginning of church life. Christ initiated it, and in so doing He became, in a remarkable and mysterious fashion, the very memorial we observe today. The Lord is the Lord's Supper.**

**I do not mean to say that the bread we partake of is literally and chemically transformed into the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth. I do not mean to imply that the fruit of the vine is literally and chemically transformed into His blood. However, we cannot overemphasize the truth that when we eat of the bread and drink of the cup we take unto ourselves the essence of Christ Himself.**

**What better way to picture such a transaction than by eating and drinking? Nutritionists have long told us that we become what we eat, or more accurately, what we eat becomes us. Today's muscle and bone were last week's meat and milk. Today's bread and fish will become next week's blood and tissue. The one who eats and the thing that is eaten eventually become one. Our union with Jesus Christ is the same. As we take Him, we become one with Him, and He one with us. It is communion, a common union or bond between the Lord and the individual believer. It is the Lord coming to man. It is His supper, His table, His fellowship. It is not a church's supper, or a denomination's supper. It is His supper.**

## **Partakers' of the Supper**

**To more fully understand the Lord's Supper we must not only see that it is His, but we must understand with whom He is pleased to share it.**

**To whom, indeed, was that first celebration of this ordinance presented? The first Communion of our Lord was given exclusively to His disciples, the apostles. It was not given to His enemies, that they might mock Him and sneer at Him. There was no place at that table for anyone who was not a disciple. You will remember that Judas left before Jesus passed the bread and wine. This fact shows us that Holy Communion is not for the unbeliever. The unregenerated man or woman has no place at the Lord's table. We have already seen that in partaking of this supper we celebrate and come into a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. We are one with Him. This union is only possible because we have been born into His family through salvation.**

**As baptism shows, we have accepted His death as our death to sin and as payment in full for sin's penalty. We have accepted His burial as the putting away of our old nature. We have accepted His resurrection as the coming to life, or quickening, in us of God's Spirit. We are dead to sin and alive to God. That which we once were, a son of Adam, became totally unacceptable to God. However, in Christ, that old man was put away and a new man was born. Only that new man can come into union with Christ. Only that new man can know the intimacy of Holy Communion with the Lord of glory. How can that which is totally unacceptable to God come into union with His Son? It cannot. Certainly, the bread may be eaten and the cup partaken from, but there can be no communion. Paul, writing by divine inspiration, gave stern warnings to those who would eat the bread of communion or drink from the cup unworthily. We will deal with those warnings more thoroughly later in the message. At present, it is enough that we understand that the Lord's Supper is offered exclusively to those who are the Lord's by new birth.**

**Our unity with Christ in Holy Communion should have a profound effect on our attitude toward other brothers and sisters in Christ. You are united with me. It is not a question of whether you are a member of a certain church or denomination. It is not a question of whether I am united with a certain church or denomination. The vital question is whether you and I are united in Christ. If we are united in Christ, eating the bread and drinking of the cup together at His table, then all other distinctions dim by comparison.**

**Many would contend that you cannot take Communion with me, nor I with you, unless we both are members of the same local church or denomination. The church, they would say, is responsible for seeing to it that no one partakes of the Lord's Supper unworthily. I do not see this in Scripture. When, in I Corinthians 11, Paul pronounces penalties for those who abuse the Lord's table, he pronounces those woes upon individuals, not upon the group. We see, then, that celebration of Holy Communion brings those who have trusted Christ into a personal and intimate fellowship and union with Him and with one another, regardless of church or denominational ties.**

## Significance of Symbolism

As we understand the union with Christ and our fellow believers that is ours through the Lord's Supper, we come to a fuller appreciation of the symbolism of the elements and practices of the Lord's table. The cup of blessing represents the blood Jesus shed for us. He said of the cup, **"This is the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" (Matt. 26:28)**. As we look back into the Old Testament, we cannot escape the striking parallel between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast. In fact, it was at the observance of Passover that the Lord's Supper was instituted. The one pointed forward to the other. The Passover was a time of witness. The father of each household explained to his children how the death angel had passed through Egypt. In every home where the blood of the sacrificial lamb had not been applied to the door post, the first-born died. That sacrificial lamb was a symbol of Jesus Christ. That blood was a symbol of His blood. That deliverance from death was a picture of the deliverance that Jesus gives to all believers. The Passover was a witness to the gospel of Christ, even before Christ came.

Just before Jesus fulfilled the death that the Passover predicted, He instituted His new feast. That feast is also a witness. It is a witness to the broken body and shed blood of the Savior. It is a witness to the fact that only in Jesus is there hope of deliverance. The saints of Israel were to observe the Passover with regularity, each time explaining and reinforcing the message that deliverance and life could only come through the shed blood of the lamb. It was a major aspect of Jewish life. People talked about it and told others about it. They explained it to their children. All Israel knew and understood that on that dark day in Egypt, a lamb died so that a nation might live. The Passover constantly called that fact to their attention. Likewise, the Lord's Supper should be a constant witness to us that we can only have life through the death and resurrection of God's eternal Lamb. He died so that we might live.

We ought, therefore, to share that message. Just as the Jews told it over and over again, so should we talk about it, tell others about it, and share it with our children. The Lord's Supper should be a constant witness to us, and to others, of what we have received in Christ Jesus.



The Lord's Supper also teaches us of the enduring nature of Christ's work. Paul wrote: **"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"** (1 Cor. 11:26). Jesus Himself told the disciples that He would not drink the cup with them again until they drank it together in His kingdom. The disciples understood this to mean Christ's eternal kingdom. So should we.

The observance of the Lord's Supper is to continue until Christ returns to earth to claim His church and establish His everlasting kingdom. This continued observance not only witnesses God's grace, but also shows us that God's grace will be continually active until the Lord's return. Jesus' broken body and shed blood will go on giving new life and new hope to men and women until the day that Christ Himself returns to earth. Then, as He promised His disciples, He will drink of His cup with us in that kingdom. The salvation represented by the Lord's Supper is as enduring as the drinking of the cup, and the drinking of the cup is to continue until the Lord's return, and then on into eternity. The Lord's Supper speaks to us, each time we observe it, of the eternal work Christ has done in us.

The ordinance also speaks of safety. If you were to ask an Israelite from those ancient days what the Passover meant to him, he might answer "safety." For ancient Jews, blood on the doorposts meant protection from death. All who were inside the house marked with the blood were safe. There is also an element of safety in the Lord's Supper. As we observe the ordinance, as we drink of the cup, we can rejoice in the knowledge that God will not judge us. He loves us. We are His own. When He sees the blood of Christ applied to the doorposts of our hearts, there is no judgment. The judgment for sin has already been carried out. When the death angel saw the blood, he knew that the lamb had died. The evidence of the lamb's death was smeared over the door. The blood seemed to cry out, "Pass over. Death has already come here." The blood of Christ declares that judgment has already been executed. Herein is safety. Christ has borne our judgment. When we receive the elements of the Lord's Supper we can be reminded of the safety we enjoy in Christ. There is no reason to fear. We need not be afraid to live, for Christ lives in us and is able to deal with all circumstances that might confront us. There is no need to fear death, for Christ has already died on our behalf. In living we have safety, in dying we have safety. As



often as we drink of the cup and eat the bread, we are reminded of our safe position in Christ.

We can enjoy that safety because God is satisfied. He is satisfied with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The broken body and shed blood of Christ are enough. Nothing more is needed. Christ died to become the propitiation for our sins. He satisfied the demand placed upon us by God's righteousness. God is righteous. Man is unrighteous. It is impossible for God to allow the unrighteous to go unpunished. He cannot and will not allow the unrighteous to enter into His holy presence. How, then, can man hope to approach God? He cannot, until his sin and unrighteousness have been judged, not until God is satisfied that judgment has been executed.

God is not only righteous and just, but also loving. He loves us and wants to draw us to Himself. Still, the matter of unjudged sins must be dealt with. Therefore, God has provided His Son to satisfy the demands of righteousness, and the Son has satisfied those demands completely. We are now able to enter into God's presence without fear, knowing that God is satisfied with the payment for our sins. Christ is the payment, the propitiation, the satisfaction for all the penalties of unrighteousness. He is enough. No more is required. As we view the Lord's table the elements witness to us anew that Jesus is enough.

Jesus has become our propitiation. God is satisfied. It is not a matter of feeling; it is a matter of fact. The blood has been shed and applied to the doorpost. The demands have been met, and we have been redeemed. We have received a new life in Christ and a new power that we did not possess before. Our sins are gone, really gone! The blood declares it.

Because the Lord's Supper witnesses to our enduring safety in Christ, its celebration and observance should be a feast of praise. We have received something about which we can rejoice. It should be a time when we thank God that we are saved. We do not receive the Lord's Supper because we are members of a church. We receive the Lord's Supper because our sins have been washed away. This is not a matter of subjective opinion. It is a matter of objective truth. God has promised He will wash away the sins of those who trust His Son Jesus Christ. When we trust Christ, asking Him to forgive us of our sins, God washes our sins away. They are gone; knowing this, we can praise God.

**One of the more interesting aspects of the blood of the Passover lamb was that it acted as a seal. The blood on the door sealed the house against intrusion by the angel of death. It was a "no trespassing" sign. Stay away, it declared, this house is sealed by God. The Bible tells us that if our sins have been washed away by Jesus' blood, then we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. He acts as a "no trespassing" sign against death, sickness, and satan. The devil has no right to enter our lives once the Holy Spirit has sealed us unto God. When the devil brings things into our lives it is only because we have allowed him access. When we trust God, and by the power of God resist the devil, we are victorious.**

**Satan is powerless to cross the threshold of any heart sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper reminds us of this truth. It becomes grounds for rejoicing. Who can help but praise God at the realization that his sins have been washed away and that he has been sealed against harm from satan through the Spirit of God?**

## **Sufficiency of Christ**

**All that God gives us, has given us, and will give us, comes to us through Jesus Christ. It is all of Him, none of us. At the risk of belaboring the point, we must repeat that His role is giving; ours is receiving. He gives us the broken body. He gives us the shed blood. We do not take them on our own. We do not add to them, we receive them as He has given them. In the Passover, the Jews were required to do nothing other than apply the blood. They did not have to bar the door. They did not have to erect a fence. They merely applied the blood and believed that the blood was enough. It was. It still is.**

**God gives. We receive. God does. We believe. No more is required. This is mentioned again, not because of its complexity, but because of its simplicity. It is too simple for some. Some would add requirements of duty to the grace of receiving. God does not. Others find it easy to receive in one area, but more difficult to receive in others.**

We have spoken a great deal in this message of the blood. We have said little about the broken body. Yet the broken body of Christ, and the bread which represents it to us, are very important. When Jesus served the bread to His disciples, He broke it and told them it was His broken body. We know that not a single bone in Jesus' body was broken. This is the fulfillment of prophecy. The leg bones of the thieves crucified beside Jesus were broken, but none of Jesus' bones were broken. How, then, was His body broken? It was broken through the beating and abuse He suffered. The Roman scourge was used to lay stripes on His body. This is the breaking of which He spoke. The prophet Isaiah wrote: **"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"** (Isa. 53:5).

**In I Peter 2:24 the apostle makes it clear that these prophetic words of Isaiah refer to Jesus by quoting them in reference to Christ. Note particularly that last phrase ". . . by whose stripes ye are healed,"** We know that Jesus' shed blood washes away our sins. We accept that as truth. But do we realize that Jesus' broken body gives us healing? We believe that God has forgiven our sins. His Word declares it. Should we not also accept what the Word declares about our healing? All of our sins were borne by Jesus on Calvary. Their power over us has been broken. They have been put away forever. Likewise, Jesus has already borne on Calvary all our sickness and infirmity. They should, therefore, have no more power over us. When we receive the cup of blessing we rejoice that God has given us the forgiveness of sins. When we receive the broken bread, should we not also rejoice that God has already provided everything that is necessary for our healing?

We often overlook this aspect of Holy Communion, yet it is as valid as any other part of the ordinance. There are many who, if they fully understood the meaning of this ordinance, could feel the healing power of Christ in their own bodies while receiving the Lord's Supper. It is not that the bread contains magic power. It is only bread. However, when we receive that bread and view it as Christ's broken body, we realize that Jesus has provided our healing in Himself. At that moment our faith may be quickened and the door opened to God's restoring power.

When we come to the Lord's table, we should not be afraid to come there for healing. He has provided that healing already in Christ Jesus.

**The broken bread speaks of healing of our physical bodies. The shed blood speaks of the washing away of our sins. God wishes for us to receive healing and to rejoice in His secure salvation. In the Lord's Supper He has given us a reminder of both these wishes.**

**We come together around His table, not because we are worthy, nor because we belong to the right church or denomination, nor because we hold any particular office within our local church. We come to the Lord's table because we have been born into His family. We celebrate the Lord's Supper as a means of entering into a personal and intimate communion and union with Him, and with our fellow believers. That supper is a reminder, or witness, to us of the enduring nature of God's work in us, of the safety we enjoy because of that work, of the complete saving and sealing that Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, and of the healing that is available to us through Him.**

## **What is Sacrament**

**Thus far, we have discussed the memorial feast that Jesus initiated as the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, or the Lord's Table. During our discussion I have purposely avoided using the word **sacrament**, because it is sometimes misunderstood. Some denominations believe that we receive salvation by receiving the Lord's Supper. They refer to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament and teach that we are saved by receiving this sacrament. This is not New Testament doctrine. We are saved by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. No one who has not received Christ can receive the Lord's Supper. We do not receive the Lord's Supper to become saved, we receive it because we are saved.**

**Still, we do not need to fear the word sacrament. The term originates in a word that describes the pledge taken by soldiers enlisting in the imperial army of Rome. These soldiers took an oath of absolute devotion to the emperor. They called that oath a sacrament. Since the Romans regarded the emperor as deity, their pledge to him was regarded as holy. The sacrament was a holy pledge of endless devotion to the emperor of Rome. For this reason, we can use the word**

sacrament to describe the Lord's Supper, as long as we understand what the word means.

Early Christians accepted the Lord's Supper as an oath bought by the blood of Christ. It was a promise of everlasting devotion. Jesus gave Himself for us. He allowed His body to be broken and His blood to be spilled. He became our Sacrifice. Because of that sacrifice, we have eternal life. We have hope that we could never possess without Him and strength that goes beyond ourselves. Because of what He has done for us, God calls on us to enter into a sacrament, a holy pledge of our devotion to Christ. We are to become living sacrifices to Him. We are to give up the things we desire most if He requires them. We are to place ourselves at His disposal. We are to surrender our wills to His will. We are to allow ourselves to be bound and sacrificed on His altar. The symbol of this oath, this pledge of devotion, is the Lord's Supper. The broken bread and the cup remind us of what Christ has done for us. They remind us of the reason we are willing to present ourselves to Him.

## What Mean Ye by this Service?

We have seen that there is a parallel relationship between the Passover feast of the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper of the New Testament. Listen to the Old Testament's instructions concerning the Passover feast:

**And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped (Exodus. 12:26, 27).**

**Compare those words to the instructions of the New Testament:**

**This cup is the new testament in my blood: this . . . , do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (I Cor. 11:25, 26).**

These passages show us that both feasts were intended to serve as memorials, reminders, signposts to direct us to spiritual truth. Because the Passover was established by the same God who established the Lord's Supper, and because it was intended to point to the truths the Lord's Supper symbolizes, we should not be surprised that we can learn much about one by studying the other. We cannot fully understand the Passover lamb until we are aware of Jesus as the great Lamb of God who gave Himself for the salvation of the world. By the same token there are some aspects of the Lord's Supper that can be better understood by a study of the Passover.

## **Passover: Its Relationship to Communion**

Let us consider the requirements for partaking of the Passover feast. The first requirement was circumcision. All males who would participate in the Passover were required to be circumcised. The rite of circumcision set Israel apart from other nations. It depicts, in a figurative sense, the cutting away of the old nature. Before a Jew could participate in the Passover, he had to submit to circumcision. Before being eligible to receive Holy Communion, one must have cut off those things that are of the world. We should do away with those things that are nonspiritual, things that would hinder us from entering into the Holy presence of God.

The second thing the Jews had to remember was that no stranger was invited to eat the Passover feast. Those who were not of Israel could take no part in the Passover. For them it would be a memorial without meaning. Their fathers had not been imprisoned in Egypt. Their ancestors had not known the Pharaoh's bondage, nor the threat of the death angel, nor miraculous deliverance by the blood of the lamb. The



entire ritual would have been meaningless to anyone not of Jewish heritage.

The same principle applies to the Lord's Supper. As we have already seen, there is no place at the Lord's table for the unregenerated. The unconverted must not be asked, or invited, or permitted to receive the Holy Communion. It would be as meaningless to them as the Passover would be to someone who was not a Jew. The unconverted have no personal understanding of the significance of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. There has never been a time when they have been united with Him through faith. They have not become a part of His body. They have not been washed in His blood. For them, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is meaningless ritual. The Word of God warns against unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote: **"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor. 11:29,30).** The teaching is clear, and very strong. There are those who have become sick, even died, as a result of unworthy participation in Holy Communion. They have eaten and drunk damnation to themselves because they were not able to comprehend the significance of the ordinance. Of course, we cannot expect them to. The Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast. The unconverted are spiritually dead cannot comprehend spiritual matters. It is important for us to share with them the message of the gospel, but it is equally important that they not participate in the Lord's Supper until they have personally accepted the Christ who instituted that Supper. **The ordinance of Holy Communion is a serious thing.**

These warnings are directed to the man on the street who does not know Christ, the man who walks into a public service and receives Holy Communion because he happens to be seated in one of the pews when the Lord's Supper is served. Before he can receive that ordinance worthily he must be saved, he must be born again. Then, and only then, is he eligible to receive the feast that is served at the Lord's table. No strangers were permitted to receive the Passover feast. No strangers to the household of grace should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper.



The third restriction of the Passover involved leaven. At the time of Passover, Jews were not allowed to have leaven in their houses. This restriction did not refer to strangers and outsiders. Rather the participants were to light candles and thoroughly search their homes for any trace of leaven, or yeast. If any was found, it was to be taken out of the house and destroyed. The people were instructed to search their cupboards, their ovens, and places where the children might have laid a piece of bread. No leaven could remain in the house at the time of Passover.

In Scripture, leaven represents sin. Before we receive the Lord's Supper we should repeat the diligent search the Jews carried out before Passover. Before participating in the memorial feast we should use the lighted candle of the Word of God and the searching flame of the Holy Spirit to uncover old leaven that may have cluttered our lives. We should dispose of the old leaven of unclean living, of worldliness, of hatred, lies, adulteries, and all other such personal sins. Remember, this purging of leaven was not for the strangers. It was the Jews who lived within the house who were to search out and remove the leaven. Those who would live under the covenant and blessing of God were required to purify their homes before God. Those of us who would enjoy the fellowship with Christ that is ours through Holy Communion must clean out of our lives those things that might separate us from God.

The period before the Passover was a time of preparation and self-examination. Such should be the case with the Lord's Supper. Everyone who would sit at the Lord's table should first examine his own life to be certain that he has fulfilled the Lord's requirements, that he has been born again, that he has been cut off from the old way of life, and that he has thoroughly purged himself of the leaven of sin that might hinder his fellowship with Christ and with the others who share the Lord's Supper.

## Two Cups of Communion

The cup is central to the Lord's Supper. An understanding of the cup is central to an understanding of the ordinance. Yet when we view the

Lord's Supper, and the events it represents, we are drawn to the fact that in those final hours before Calvary there is not one cup, but two. There is the cup of the Lord, and there is the Lord's cup. There is the cup that Christ received from His Father, and there is the cup that we receive from Christ. There is the cup that He drank on our behalf, and there is the cup that we drink at His invitation. They are two, and yet the message of each is wondrously woven into the message of the other. We read about the first of these cups in **John 18:11**. "**Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?**" Here He was speaking of His own cup, the cup from which He would drink, the cup of the Lord. The second cup, the cup which He gives to us, is described in **I Corinthians 11:25, 26**. "**After the same manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.**" Studying the two cups can help us understand the relationship we enjoy with Christ. Earlier we spoke a great deal of the union with Christ we enjoy through Holy Communion. When we understand the relationship of the two cups, we will better understand that union.

## Our Christian Inheritance

There can be no better place to begin a study of our union with Christ than with the question "What is union?" Union is the condition that exists when one or more things are united. Being united is being bound together. When things are united they become less identifiable as individual things and more recognizable as one unit. When things come into union with each other they are no longer thought of principally as several small things, but as one larger thing.

Often, when a person accepts Christ as Savior and is born again he is elated at the knowledge that he will escape eternal judgment and be allowed everlasting sanctuary in heaven. But many times the new Christian does not realize all that has become his when he accepted

Jesus. Sadly, that Christian may go through much, or all, of his life on earth without ever enjoying his salvation to its fullest, because he does not realize what became his at his new birth.

One of the purposes of the Lord's Supper is to remind us of these benefits. Without detracting from the beauty and splendor of heaven, we need to understand that escaping hell and gaining heaven is not all there is to salvation. Receiving a place in heaven is the result of the transaction that took place on our behalf at the moment we accepted Christ. Central to that transaction is our union with Him. When we accepted Christ, we were united with Him, bound to Him, literally placed in Him. All that we were was placed upon Him, and all that He is was made available to us. When a person is saved, he does not merely receive a ticket to heaven. Instead, he becomes the beneficiary of a divine plan that makes a life of victory on earth and an eternity of blessing in heaven the normal and expected things.

The whole process begins with a principle called **imputation**. Imputing is similar to an accounting transaction in which credit is applied to one's account, or expenses are charged to that account. If you were to go to a department store and buy an item with a credit card, the price of that item would be charged to your account. When payment came due, you would be required to either make payment or forfeit the item. Imagine, however, someone who knew and loved you entered the store and, from his own pocket, paid in full for the item which you had charged. Your account would be reduced to a zero balance, and no more would be required of you. The payment of another would have been credited, or imputed, to your account. It would be a senseless waste of time to suggest that since you had not personally made the payment some further payment was due from you. You would need only to display the receipt, marked "PAID IN FULL," to silence any critic. This is the principle of imputation. Let us, then, examine how that principle applies to salvation.

All of us are descendants of Adam. When Adam rebelled against God, he died spiritually. That part of him which was able to enjoy the most intimate fellowship with God was rendered ineffective. All of us have inherited that defect. The question at hand is not whether we are good or bad, but whether we are descended from Adam. Even though evolutionary teaching has tried for generations to persuade us

otherwise, we cannot escape the scriptural teaching that all of us are physically and spiritually tied to that first created man. We are, by nature, defective. We are sinners, because we were born that way. We cannot, by reformation or dedication, change that fact any more than a dog, by chirping, could become a bird, or a bird, by barking become a dog. We have inherited our nature from our father, Adam.

But we have inherited other things from Adam as well. Adam lived in a perfect environment. It was free from conflict, heartache, disease, pain, sorrow, and imperfection. When Adam sinned, not only did he die spiritually, but he also brought down God's wrath on all of creation. God cursed the earth because of Adam's sin. Beauty was replaced with barrenness. Harmony gave way to discord. Ease was pushed aside by labor. Perfection was marred by imperfection. Life withered into death. All the pain, all the sorrow, all the unpleasantness, all the death in our world can be traced either directly, or indirectly, to Adam's choice of sin and God's resulting curse. Adam's sin effectively alienated him, and all his descendants, from God.

But God is a God of love. God judged Adam for his sin, but He did not cease to love the man He created. He thrust Adam out of the Garden, but He made him a coat of animal skin to cover his nakedness. God still loved Adam. Likewise, God loves the descendants of Adam. We do not deserve that love. We cannot earn it. Still, God offers it. Because He loves us, God has provided a means for restoring to us that which was lost in Adam. That process, that transaction, is very similar to the imaginary case of the department store charge account.

The simplest explanation is this: God "charged" all of our sin to Christ's account and all of Christ's righteousness to our account. All the penalty and judgment that our sin deserved was charged to Christ's account. He, then, paid that account in full with His broken body and shed blood. On the other side of the ledger, all that Christ accomplished through that sacrifice was credited to our account. There are many passages of Scripture that touch upon this marvelous transaction. Consider these few:

**For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died**

for them, and rose again. ... Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:14,15,17,21).

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by those stripes ye were healed (II Pet. 2:24).

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

What is it that these verses teach us? They tell us that everything we inherited from Adam went to the cross with Christ. All the tragic fruit of Adam's sin went up the road to Calvary with Jesus. He bore them in His own body. He bore all our sins. He bore our inherited position in Adam. He bore our curse, our griefs, our sorrows, our chastisement, our wounds, our bruises, and our iniquity. All that has come to us as the result of Adam's sin was borne by Jesus for us. It was all imputed to Him. It was all charged to His account. When the charges had been made, Christ paid them in full.

What are the benefits to us from this transaction? Imputation is a two-way transaction. What was charged against our account was imputed to Christ's. What was credited to Christ's account was imputed to ours. Every benefit obtained by Christ through His sacrifice on Calvary has already been written down on our side of the ledger. First, we understand that Christ accomplished death for us. The wages, or payment due us for our sin, is death. But Jesus has already satisfied that required payment.

Death is no longer a threat to us. It is as senseless for us to fear death as it would be for us to fear the collection agent in our department store illustration. All that was necessary to silence that agent was to display the paid receipt. In the case of death, the same is true. Christ's shed

blood, represented to us by the cup of the Lord's Supper, is the receipt, the irrefutable evidence that death has been accomplished on our behalf. When Christ died, we died with Him. The demand for payment was satisfied. But Christ's death accomplished more for us than the mere satisfaction of the wages of sin. When Christ died, everything that He had borne up that gruesome hill died with Him. Our sins died with Him. Our curse died with Him. Our griefs died with Him. Our sorrows, chastisement, wounds, bruises, and iniquity all died with Him. These things should have no more power over us. They are dead. The Bible says they are dead. God considers them dead. All that remains is for us to, by faith, accept the fact that they are dead.

Death, however, is only half the picture. Christ died, then later rose from the dead. It only follows that if we were crucified with Christ, we were also made alive with Him. The old life, which was Adam's life, is dead. New life, which is God's, has been given to us. We are not changed; we are born all over again. We are new creatures. The old is gone, the new has come. All this is possible because of our union with Christ. When we accepted Christ as Savior, God placed us in Him. We are not beside Christ, or behind Him. We are in Him. We are united with Him. Because we are in Him, His death has become our death, and His resurrection has become our resurrection. All the things that were destroyed by His death were destroyed for us and in us. All the benefits of life that sprung forth from that borrowed tomb have become ours to claim.

All this, of course, brings us back to the matter of the two cups. Jesus drank of one. We drink of the other. One is horrible. One is marvelous. We deserve the horrid one, but Christ has already drunk of it for us, so we are now able to enjoy the marvelous cup. Each time we do, we are reminded of all that Christ accomplished for us. We are reminded that we are in Him and He in us.

The first cup, Christ's cup, pictures His sacrificial death. After celebrating the final Passover feast with His disciples, Christ entered the Garden of Gethsemane on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, a brief walk from the upper room. Kneeling under an olive tree, our Lord began to drink from His cup. What was the nature of that cup? His cup was a cup of bitter solitude, a cup of loneliness. His nearest disciples slept while He was in agony. Under that great rugged tree, He was



alone. Shortly, even His heavenly Father would turn away. Jesus drank of the cup for you and me. When He had drunk all, He offered us a cup of friendship and fellowship. When we come to the Lord we receive the fellowship of the saints and the friendship of many wonderful brothers and sisters.

What a difference there is between His cup and ours! The cup He drank of was bitter, accompanied by loneliness and solitude. The cup we drink of is sweet with fellowship and friendship. I have heard thousands of people say that since they have come to the Lord they have enjoyed the sweetest moments of their lives. This is the cup of sweetness. We enter into fellowship and gladness with one another through Christ. Through Him we have become one with all others who believe in Him. There is no more need for loneliness or bitterness. He drank of that cup for us, so that we might enjoy a better one.

In drinking of His cup He has given us a different cup, a cup of fellowship with other believers and with the Lord.

The cup Jesus drank of was also a cup of betrayal. One with whom Jesus walked, with whom He had talked, with whom He had eaten, with whom He had climbed the rugged Judean hills was the one who turned on Him. One who had been present when Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead became the Lord's betrayer. It was a tragic and painful episode for Christ, yet it is so typical of life. Betrayal is often the rule, not the exception. The one whom we believe to be our nearest companion may turn farthest from us. We may be saddened, yet it should not be a time for despair. For at that exact moment God's Spirit may remind us that there is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother. That Friend is Jesus. He drank of a cup filled with betrayal so that He might offer us a cup of loyalty. During difficult times we may enter the very throne room of God, and come into the presence of the Most High, and He seems to say, "I have a cup for you, a cup of loyalty. I will not leave you. I will not forsake you. You will never be alone." We drink the cup of loyalty made available to us because Jesus endured one filled with betrayal.

Because of what Christ accomplished through His betrayal, death, and resurrection, we can enjoy a bond of loyalty foreign to nonbelievers. As a result of the new birth made possible by that betrayal, the Spirit of



Christ is alive in us. That same Spirit is alive in our fellow believers. We are in Christ. They are in Christ. The result is a supernatural bond of fellowship stronger than anything else on earth. Sometimes our Christian friends become closer to us than our own families, and the friendship of those within the church stronger than the bond of blood relationship. This is the cup of loyalty. Christ is loyal to us. His servants are loyal to us. We are able to be loyal to Him and to all who are His.

As we look closer at the cup Jesus drank of, we see that it was a cup of anger, a cup of wrath. Many were angry with Him. Satan was angry with Him. Governmental officials were angry with Him. Religious people were angry with Him. This is sometimes a confusing situation. Jesus' greatest opposition came from those who should have recognized and supported Him. Often, those we would expect to be tender and kind are not so. Jesus had to suffer this. But Jesus faced more than mere human anger and betrayal. He faced the wrath of God. When He became sin for you and me, He was saying, "I accept Melva McClain's sins, and the sins of all mankind, and carry them with me to the cross." The Father's reply was clear: "I cannot look upon sin." The Bible tells us that the Father turned His back on Jesus, His only begotten Son. Jesus cried out, "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" (Matt. 27:46). In that moment Jesus was enduring the wrath of God against sin. In so doing, He was providing for us a cup of peace. He took to Himself the cup of wrath and anger so that He might present to us the cup of peace.

Peace is a gift from God. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. We, as believers in Christ, do not seek peace. We have peace. It has been given to us. It flows outward from our innermost beings. We do not need to seek it, as the unbeliever does. Man may spend his fortunes, may run to the seashores or climb to the mountains seeking an elusive thing called peace. Christians do not need to launch such an ambitious and futile search. They need only to look to Jesus and accept the accomplished fact. As they receive the bread and the cup, they are reminded that Jesus suffered anger so that His people might know peace.

The cup Jesus drank of was a cup of bruising. The Romans beat Him savagely with whips and with their hands. Scarlet furrows were cut into His flesh by their cruel scourge. They forced a jagged crown of thorns

down upon His brow. He drank long and deep from the cup of bruising, that we might have a cup of healing. Isaiah wrote that by His stripes we are healed. Peter wrote that by His stripes we were healed. The use of the past tense there is not accidental. The healing has already been consummated. All that remains is for the believer to accept that accomplishment. The receiving of the Lord's Supper should be a time of healing. As believers receive the broken bread, they should be reminded that Christ's body was broken for their healing. That realization should quicken in them the faith necessary to step out and claim the healing that God has already accomplished on their behalf. It belongs to us. He has purchased it for us.

Christ's cup was also a cup of sorrows. Scripture calls Him a Man of sorrows. Yet most of those sorrows were ours, sorrows that He carried up Golgotha's hill for us. He bore them there so that we might have a cup of joy. Our sorrows became His sorrows so that His joy might become ours.

Finally, the cup which Jesus received from His Father was a cup of death. One of the most astounding facts of history is that God would be willing to die so that man might live. Jesus, who was in every way equal to God the Father, humbled Himself to the position of death. Jesus had no sin of His own but took on Himself our sins.

The Jews did not kill Jesus. Had He wished to escape them, He could have turned them away with one sweep of His hand. The Romans did not kill Jesus. One word from His mouth could have called for such awesome legions of heavenly warriors that even the mighty armies of Rome would have cowered in retreat. Flesh and blood did not kill Jesus; sin killed Jesus. It was not His sin; it was our sin, yours and mine. Jesus, according to His own loving choice, voluntarily bore our sins, even though bearing them meant His own death. Jesus chose to drink of the cup of death so that we could drink from the cup of life. There is no more death for us. Christ has pressed that cup against His lips and drained it to the dregs. He bore death for us, so that we might never have to face it ourselves. The believer may have to face the shadow, or appearance, of death; but it is only a shadow, not death.

The earthly body, the flesh and blood that descended from Adam, may wither and fade, but the spirit, which is born again from God, cannot

die. It will be united with a new and glorified body and will live forever in the presence of God Himself. When Jesus drank of the cup of death and then rose victoriously from the grave, He forever abolished death's reign of terror over the believer. He emptied the cup of death and replaced it with a cup of eternal life.

There are two cups involved in Holy Communion. Only one is visible to our physical eyes. It is the cup Christ gives us. It is a cup of fellowship and friendship, a cup of loyalty, of peace, healing, joy, and life. Yet it was only made possible because Jesus was willing to drink of a cup of bitterness and loneliness, solitude, betrayal, wrath, bruising, sorrows, and death.

The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, is so much more than many believe. It is not a Sunday celebration. It is more; it is life. It is a reminder that Christ has made us one with Himself. It witnesses to us that we are in Christ and that He is in us. It brings to our minds all the things Jesus bore on our behalf and all the things He has made available to us.

## Three Crosses

The Lord's Supper is necessarily linked to the death of Christ. The bread represents His broken body; the cup represents His shed blood. Any consideration of the Lord's Supper must focus to some degree on Calvary and the crucifixion of Christ.

Let us, then, study the Crucifixion by discussing three crosses. These are not the crosses that stood on the hill outside of Jerusalem. These are the crosses mentioned in **Galatians 6:14**. "**But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**"

The three crosses of which Paul spoke are, in fact, only one cross. Yet there are three distinct aspects of the work of that cross. In a sense, we do no injustice to Paul's writing to speak of three crosses.

## **Crucifying Self-Glorification**

**Paul desired that he should never glory, or boast, or find reason for pride, in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul's desire was to glorify Christ, not Paul. He meant that there should never be any self-glorification. How easy it is to place ourselves upon a pinnacle and feel that we are better than others, cleaner than others, or more holy than others! How easily we forget that any value we have, any cleanness, any holiness we have comes to us through Jesus Christ. Self-glorification is a terrible thing. It is a nonspiritual attitude. It says that what I am is of my own making. Such an attitude ignores the fact that we are descendants of Adam, men and women who are sinful and unrighteous by our very nature.**

**Paul chose to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ. Why the cross? Why not some other aspect of Christ's work? Paul chose the cross because it was at the cross that Paul, in Christ, was crucified. Remember, when we accept Christ we accept His death as our own death. When He died, all that we were in Adam died with Him. Our "old man," our old way of life, was crucified with Christ. Therefore, all the things in which we might find reason to glory have already been nailed to the cross of Christ.**

**If we quit looking at the cross, if we take our attention off of that cruel scene, we may not remember that we are crucified with Christ there. As long as we keep the cross before us, we are reminded that any reason for personal boasting was nailed to that Roman cross with Jesus. Again we see the value of the Lord's Supper. How can we possibly eat the bread and drink of the cup without being reminded that our old man is dead? There is no reason to glory in ourselves.**

**Still, self-glorification is common. It takes many forms. One form is race glorification. We frequently see people boasting of their particular race, implying that others are inferior in some way. One says, "I am black." Another boasts that he is not black. One boasts of his Asian heritage, while another is proud not to be of Asian descent. This is**

foolish. It is carnal. Race-glorification will never bring anyone to heaven. It is all for no reason. No race is superior or inferior to any other.

The blood that flows through our veins is the same, regardless of the pigment of our skin. The blood of an Asian can be used in a life-saving transfusion for a South American. The blood of a South American can save a European. The blood of a European can save an American Indian. The blood of an American Indian can save an African. From a purely natural sense, race-glorification is without basis. From a spiritual standpoint, it is even more unfounded. When Jesus went to the cross, all that we are died with Him, including our racial distinctions. The sins of men and women from all races sent Jesus to the cross, and the sins of men and women from all races died with Him there. He did not die for certain racial groupings. He died for everyone.

The important question is not whether we belong to a certain racial group, but whether we are in Christ.

When we come into union with Him, our individual racial heritage loses significance. This does not mean we should be ashamed of our racial heritage. We should not be ashamed to be black or white or yellow. This simply means racial heritage is irrelevant. In Christ we have a new racial heritage. We are the offspring of God, born into His family. There, the color of our skin is meaningless. The cross of Christ should be a constant reminder of that fact.

Another form of self-glorification is the glorification of nations. Often various nations will rise and boast that theirs is the greatest country. Whether they are French, German, Japanese, or American, this attitude is not pleasing to God. Paul said, "I will not glory in this." Understand that Paul had apparent reason for boasting. He was Roman, and being a Roman in those days was much like being an American today. Still, Paul chose not to boast of his national heritage. I am not suggesting that Christians be ashamed of their national heritage, that they refuse to salute their flag, or that they be disrespectful to their national leaders. I only wish to emphasize that there will be no ethnic neighborhoods in heaven. In Christ there are no national distinctions. We may thank God that we live in a country that, by His grace, allows greater liberty and more opportunity than another, but we must never lose sight of the

**truth that we have that liberty and opportunity only through God's grace.**

**We cannot glory in something that God has given us which we in no way earned. We may be grateful for our national heritage, but we should only glory in the cross of Christ.**

**There are many areas in which Christians continually glory and boast, when in fact there should be but one, the cross of Christ. There are those who boast and glory in their church. The local church is important; we should support our church, love it, and be grateful for it. But our glorying should be in the cross of Christ.**

**Others boast of their education. Paul was an educated man. In fact, he was so well educated that one governor said that he had gone crazy because of too much learning. Still, Paul chose not to glory in his education, but only in the cross.**

**Others boast of their philosophy, traditions, rituals, or material possessions, but Paul decided to glory only in the cross of Christ. It was the cross that reminded Paul of the grace of God. It was the cross that reminded Paul that all his national heritage, racial heritage, education, philosophy, traditions, and all the advantages of this world had to offer could not bring him one step closer to God, or one foot nearer the gates of heaven.**

**Paul knew that long after race had been forgotten, nations had faded, education had ceased, traditions had vanished, and material wealth had decayed, the cross and the work that Jesus did there would remain. Paul had his emphasis in the proper place. He chose not to glory in those things that are temporary. He chose to glory in that which is eternal, the cross of Christ.**

## **Crucifying Worldliness**



**Paul also said the world was crucified to him. This is another aspect of the cross. Paul developed a new viewpoint of this world. One of the major difficulties for many Christians was no problem for him. Many believers have no trouble loving Jesus. After all, He loved us and gave up all the wealth of heaven to bring us forgiveness and eternal life. But ceasing to love the world is a problem. We, as descendants of Adam, were born into this world. We grew up here and live here every day. The things we enjoy doing are found here. The people we love live here. We have no trouble loving God, but we just can't seem to let go of the world.**

**The real problem is that we cannot, or will not, distinguish between the temporal and eternal. We confuse temporary pleasures and values with eternal ones. We become spiritually cross-eyed, and our only cure is the cross. Paul identified those things that were temporary and nailed them to the tree. His attitude was, "The world is nailed to the tree like a criminal. The world is doomed. I will take the world, with all its rottenness, and nail it to the cross. It is crucified to me."**

**That was Paul's solution. It should be ours, too. Identify those things that are of this world and execute them on the cross.**

**Identifying the things that are of the world is a continuing process. On one day, the Holy Spirit may convict us that something is of the world. So we quickly take that thing and nail it to the cross. The next day, He may show us something entirely different that must go to that same cross. We shouldn't expect to put everything on that cross in one trip. Nor should we be discouraged if, just when we think the world's hold on us is dead, the Spirit shows us a new area that needs to be crucified. This is normal. It is part of spiritual growth.**

**We should not be discouraged if we cannot clearly identify all that needs crucifixion at any one moment, as long as we are always ready to crucify any form of worldliness that the Holy Spirit reveals to us. Identifying worldliness is really a matter of developing heavenly vision. We need to see things as God sees them. We need to look at things the way God does. Then the things of the world will become easily visible to us.**

**As descendants of Adam we were born into this world. However, we dare not forget that the cross of Christ has cancelled our inheritance**



from Adam, and the resurrection of Christ has given us a new birth. In a very real sense, we are no longer connected to this world. Our birth through Adam is done away with. Now we are born of God. All that we have as a result of our Adamic birth is only temporary. It can go to the cross.

We have said that we grew up here; that is partially true. Our physical bodies have experienced growth on this planet. Yet our physical body is part of the old birth. As newly born Christians, we began to experience spiritual growth. We are even now growing in the Lord. Our physical growth, our physical bodies, are temporary. They, and all their sickness and pain and imperfections, are not a part of God's new creation for us. They can go to the cross. We have said that we live here every day. That is true, as well, and the truth of it is a large part of our problem. In Ephesians 2:6 Paul tells us that God has raised us up from spiritual death through Christ Jesus, and has elevated us to sit with Christ in heavenly places. In other words, our true position is in heaven. Our life is there. Our position here is only temporary.

For the next few years, and none of us can be certain how many, our day-to-day activity will be limited to this world. But our life is not of this world; our life is heavenly. In a short time, whether through physical death or at the return of Christ, our temporary existence here will give place to our permanent existence with Christ in heavenly places. We have also said that the things we enjoyed doing are here. Can you imagine Paul at the Roman Colosseum watching a gladiator contest? What Rome considered the choicest pleasure, Paul considered vile and depraved. He nailed it to the cross. The popular pleasures of this day would sicken Paul. Ours is a world eaten up by pleasure. Like the Romans of two thousand years ago, we live for enjoyment. Yet these senseless frivolities last only a few moments. They bring us temporary pleasure, and whet our sensual appetites for even more. These temporary pleasures must go to the cross.

I am not suggesting that all enjoyment is wrong, though some forms of enjoyment most definitely are. I believe that Paul enjoyed frequent moments of clean and wholesome pleasure. But even these wholesome things were temporary. They did not control Paul, nor did he live for them. He was willing to lay even the harmless pleasures aside if God required it. All of this world was crucified to him.

Finally, we have said that the people we love live in this world. One of the things that makes heaven near and dear to us is the knowledge that many of our friends and loved ones are already there. We are drawn to that place because it is where people we love are living. We have already seen that those of us who are in Christ are not of this world. Our physical being exists here temporarily, but our life is in heaven. The same is true of our friends and neighbors who have accepted Christ but have not yet gone on to meet Him. In that sense, the people we love do not live here. Some of them have already transferred their resident status to heaven. Others, though waiting to make that transfer, have not yet departed. It is of little consequence whether we go before them or they before us. Eventually we will all be united in that glorious place.

The element of sadness enters in the fact that many whom we love are neither living in heaven nor waiting to move there. They are lost and without hope. They, too, just like every other thing that is of this earth, must be taken to the cross. There are two dimensions, two ways, in which we must place them there.

First, we must realize that only God can save them. Our righteousness cannot save them, and theirs certainly cannot. So in prayer we must take them to the cross. We must say, "I love these people, and I know that You do also. I cannot save them. You can. Please, by Your Holy Spirit, show them they need salvation and bring them to a place of accepting Christ." We cannot die for them; Christ already has. Therefore, we must take them to His cross in prayer.

Still, there is a second way in which we can take them to the cross. That way is the gospel. We may speak to them personally about Christ; we may invite them to attend a gospel service; we may give them good books or gospel tracts; we may direct their attention to Christian radio or television broadcasts. There are many paths down which we may lead them, so long as those paths end at the cross.



## Crucifying Self

Not only did Paul regard the world as dead and gone, he also considered himself as dead to the world. Paul, as a believer, was crucified with Christ. When Christ went to the cross, Paul went too. When Christ died, Paul died. What good are the things of this world to a dead man? They are of absolutely no value. Before his conversion, Paul was rapidly advancing in the religious system of his day. He was a Pharisee. He was zealous. He had studied under the greatest teachers of the time. His future was bright. He had ambition and potential. But Paul never fulfilled that ambition or realized that potential. Just when he seemed near to reaching the height of success within the Jewish religion, Paul "died." How many times have we heard of or read about a promising young man or woman who has been cut down in their prime by death? It seems such a tragedy. In Paul's case, however, it was not. Paul was filled with promise and was at his prime. But his death was no tragedy; it was a victory.

Saul of Tarsus left Jerusalem enroute to Damascus. He had official papers from the high priest. He was going to take some Christians into custody. At some point along that road, Saul of Tarsus came face to face with Jesus of Nazareth. And Saul of Tarsus died. His body did not cease to function, and his heart did not stop. He did not quit breathing. But he died, nonetheless. He was no longer advancing in the religious system of his day. He was no longer a Pharisee. He was no longer ambitious or zealous. His future no longer held the promise of popularity among his fellows. In fact, he was no longer even Saul of Tarsus. He was crucified with Christ, and the old way of life was gone.

How beautiful this is, how lovely! Here is a man who chose to identify himself with all the suffering and giving of Christ, even though it meant the end of all that had once seemed important. Those of you who have lived enough years have watched bright young stars appear in the entertainment industry, sparkle for a brief time, then vanish. You have beheld the fallen stars of the financial world. But Paul shows us a better way. It is better for you and me to be crucified with Christ than for us to live a flagrant life of sin and pleasure, only to die and be eternally lost.

Paul could have been someone important in the eyes of the world, yet he chose to die. He chose to allow his plans and dreams to be crucified with Christ. He chose to become a nobody. To those of his time, he wasted his

life on a poor cause. He went from potential to oblivion. Yet in a way that few could have foreseen, God elevated Paul to a position of spiritual prominence that no one outside of Christ Himself has ever enjoyed. Paul gave up everything. He willingly became a nobody. Because of that attitude God made him somebody very special.

This world had no place for Paul. Though he had once been important in it, he said, "I want no place in this world." To many, that seems like an old-fashioned idea, a dead puritanism. But it is not. There are young men and women rising up today with a greater desire and willingness to abandon all and go to the cross with Jesus than this world has ever known. There are young people within the church who have more desire to sacrifice themselves in order to save the world than we have had in many generations. This is thrilling. Yet there are still so many to whom religion is comfortable and cozy. They know of no death to the old way, no sacrifice, no crucifixion. The church, especially in America, has become luxurious and lazy. We have many million-dollar, and even multimillion-dollar, churches. Yet half the people living on earth have never ever heard the name Jesus, much less the wonderful truth that He will forgive their sins and give them eternal life.

We have not carried out the Great Commission. We have not given the gospel to our generation. We sit in our expensive buildings, our gorgeous carpets beneath our feet, our magnificent stained-glass windows filtering the rays of light, our glorious pulpits before us, our inspiring choirs entertaining us. We glitter with our own glamour, but our spirits are not at the cross where Jesus died.

Jesus had to die, or we could not be saved. There is no salvation apart from the cross of Christ. Christ, the Son of God, came from a resplendent throne in heaven, surrounded by tens of thousands of angels who constantly sang His praises, in order to face the cross for you and me. He accomplished on our behalf all that God requires in order for us to enter into His presence. His cross, His work was sufficient to do that which nothing else could do. For that reason Paul chose to glory in nothing but Christ's cross. He said, "I will nail the world to the cross. It is dead to me." Further, he said, "I will go to that cross, as well." I do not know many people who are, at this moment, crucified to this world. They glory in their big cars, beautiful homes, and prestigious careers.

**They cannot say with Paul, "The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."**

**As we take Communion we should be impressed with the need of adopting Paul's attitude. The bread is broken. So should our lives be broken, not torn to pieces by sin, but humbled by the grace of God. We should allow our hearts to be broken with the burden that Paul carried for the salvation of the world. Our hearts should be broken for the thousands who die each day, for the millions who are hungry, for the multitudes who suffer from disease or distress.**

**As we take that broken bread we should ask God to remove our pride, break our self-righteous attitudes, even as the body of His only begotten Son was broken for us. That bread should forever remind us of the attitude we, as believers, should always display toward those around us. As that bread is broken, as Christ was broken, so should we be broken also.**

**When we drink of the cup, we should recall the blood that Jesus gave for us. Three thousand years before science had unlocked the mysterious functions of the bloodstream, Scripture told us blood is the source of life. Since the day of Adam, blood has been the price paid for sin. Blood speaks of atonement for sins. Blood should be our reminder of the means whereby we have a hope of heaven, and the responsibility that we have to share that hope with the world.**

**Three crosses were erected outside Jerusalem on the day Christ was crucified. On one cross a man died in sin, the thief who would not believe. On the middle cross a Man died for sin, paying the price required for the salvation of the world. On the third cross a man died to sin, gaining eternal life through faith in Christ. Those three crosses speak to us of rejection, redemption, and reception.**

**The first man rejected the message and was lost. The second Man *was* the message, giving Himself for the sins of others. The third man received the message and was saved. My first concern is that everyone who reads these pages be like that third man, who received Christ as Savior. I can only pray and hope that anyone reading these words who has not received Christ would do as that dying thief, and place all hope for eternity in Jesus Christ.**

Many who read these pages have long ago placed their trust in Christ. Of them I would ask whether the three aspects of the cross that became so real to Paul have become real to them, too. How many of us can honestly say that we glory, or boast, in nothing but Christ's cross?

The next time we receive the Lord's Supper, the next time we partake of the broken bread and the cup, may we hear the words of Paul again: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

## Our Suffering Savior

There is nothing in Christendom so moving as the Crucifixion. Christ's crucifixion is memorialized for us through Holy Communion, possibly the most stirring exercise of Christian worship. We are always glad for Communion day, when we can come before the Lord and remember the body that was broken for us and the blood that was shed for us. As we receive Communion, it is not unusual for us to recall the suffering Jesus experienced. We will speak of that suffering in this message. However, we seldom stop to think that the Trinity was involved at Calvary. We understand that Christ was there, but we sometimes overlook the fact that the Father and the Holy Spirit were there also.

In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The purpose of Calvary is everlasting life. God loved the world, and loves it still. He loves each and every man and woman and boy and girl in it. Because of that love, He desires for all of us to share in eternal life with Him. The only way this can happen is through Jesus Christ. God gave us His Son so that we can have eternal life. Eternal life, or everlasting life, is the central theme and sole purpose for Calvary.

## A Grieving Heart Loves



The first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, was a principal Participant in the events of Calvary. The Father grieved over lost mankind. Scripture tells us the sin of man brought great grief to God the Father. We are even told that the Father once repented that He had made men. Man had gone so far in the wrong direction, and God was hurt so deeply by it, that God concluded it would have been better for the entire race if it had not been created. Yet the heart that grieves is the heart that loves. As we read John 3:16, we see that. The Father had such intense love and care and emotion for mankind that He was willing to go through the depths of sorrow, willing to give His own Son, in order to save the fallen race.

The Father was very much a part of the Crucifixion. He was there in His Son, listening to every word. When the Son looked up to Him and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He was close by saying, "I do. I have. I will." Jesus had taught His disciples that He and the Father were One. Because They were, and are, One, the Father was much involved in the suffering of Christ's passion. He was involved in the salvation of the human race. He was listening carefully to every word. He was watching every event intently. When the ultimate sacrifice was offered by His Son, when Jesus laid down His life for men who had broken the laws of God and turned their backs upon His righteousness, God the Father received and accepted that sacrifice.

## Love is Capable of Suffering

Any being capable of love is also capable of suffering. God is love. Therefore He is certainly capable of suffering. Love and suffering are linked to love's object. Those whom we love the most have the greatest capacity to cause us suffering. If we are rejected or insulted by someone for whom we care very little, we will not suffer much over that rejection or insult. But if we are rejected or insulted by one whom we love deeply, that rejection or insult will cause deep pain. God loves us. He suffers when we do wrong, and He suffers when we suffer.



**In studying nations that worship heathen gods, I found that most of them are gods of anger and hate and revenge and punishment. In most cultures there is no god of love. When there is, it is generally a god of selfish physical love, not a god of divine love and divine sacrifice. The heathen countries know nothing of a god who suffers when people suffer and who is willing to endure that suffering to see people saved. We must go to Calvary to know that sort of God. God the Father was present, through His Son, experiencing all the pain and suffering of Calvary. It always moves me to realize that the passion of the Son was also the passion of the Father.**

**We see then, that the love which made Calvary a reality was the love which involved God the Father in the events that took place there. In giving His Son, and loving those for whom His Son was given, God the Father had a part in Calvary.**

## **The Holy Spirit at Calvary**

**The Holy Spirit was also involved in this most dramatic period of human history. When the Son of God, suspended on a cross between the heavens and the earth, was giving Himself to save mankind, the Holy Spirit was there. The Holy Spirit is mentioned for the first time in Scripture on the first page of the Bible, where it says that He moved upon the waters. He brought cosmos out of chaos. That has been His business ever since, seeking to bring beauty out of ungodliness, seeking to bring order out of disorder. But the most important work of the Holy Spirit is not the work of creation, it is the part He plays in the new creation.**

**It was the Father who gave the Son. It was the Son who gave His life, and it is the Spirit who draws us to salvation. Whatever our color or race, it is the Holy Spirit who works in our hearts, leading us to Calvary. The work Jesus accomplished on the cross is continued by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for us to know Christ unless the Holy Spirit brings us to Him. In that sense, the Holy Spirit was very much part of**

**Calvary. He is closely related to the process through which we receive salvation, for He draws us to the cross and brings us to repentance. He is the One who works in us, and when we have come to the Lord Jesus, He is the One who fills us and empowers us to share that message with others. He is the One who helps us to understand the Scriptures. He is the One who quickens our hearts and minds to spiritual truths.**

**We may wonder whether the Holy Spirit truly had a part in the work of Calvary. But if we understand that work at all, we must conclude that He did. For if He had no part in that work, then Calvary would not be alive in our own hearts. He is the One who has given us understanding of what Jesus did, and He is the One who has drawn us to accept Jesus as Savior.**

## **Passion of the Son**

**We come now to the One whom we understand as having a greater part in Calvary than any other member of the Godhead. He is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ—the Son of God. The passion of the Son of God is so great the entire New Testament staggers under the weight of the agony of His sufferings. The New Testament begins with One who lived in sublime glory, seated upon a throne, with ten thousand times ten thousand heavenly creatures bowing and adoring Him, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." From all that splendor He came to a simple manger in Bethlehem.**

**Jesus apparently led a relatively uneventful early life. We are told little about Him until shortly before His ministry began. Then He began going throughout Judea and Galilee, preaching, teaching, and healing the sick. Some thought He was a prophet. Others accepted Him as the Messiah. Many thought He would overthrow the Roman government and establish an earthly kingdom. His ministry came to a climax when one of His disciples betrayed Him and conspired with His enemies to have Him crucified. The intensity of the anguish which the Lord Jesus Christ experienced was so great that not even His closest friends could understand. His own mother, His own disciples and friends, could not**

comprehend the crimson curtain that fell across the final days of His ministry.

Some of His disciples wanted Him to remain in the area across the Jordan and escape possible death. Others wanted to make Him a King so that they would not be forced to watch Him die. They were unable to understand. They could not comprehend until later, after that veil that separated man and God had been torn and a new way opened up to the heart of the Father. They were unable to see the depth of His suffering until after His resurrection, until after He had given to them His Holy Spirit. Because Jesus was an infinite Being, we will not understand the extent of His suffering until we have been united with Him in heaven. We can, however, in looking back over the events of Calvary, reach a certain understanding of the passion of Christ.

## Suffering As God

Jesus suffered as only the divine can suffer. His love was infinite, so the pain of His broken heart was equally infinite. The depth of His companionship with His Father was beyond measure; therefore, the agony of His separation was beyond our comprehension. The rejection He felt, the loneliness He experienced, the sorrow He endured, were all greater than our finite minds can comprehend. As God He suffered more than any human being can ever suffer. As God He was the source of life, yet He suffered the pain of laying that life aside. As God He shared in all of heaven, yet suffered the humiliation of laying all of His heavenly inheritance aside in order to face death as a criminal. As God He suffered in a way that man cannot.

## Suffering As Man

**But Jesus was also human, and He suffered as a Man. He endured anguish in all three areas of the human personality. The Bible teaches us that humans have spirits, souls, and bodies. Christ suffered in all of these. The spirit is that part of man which communicates with God. When Adam sinned, his spirit was rendered dead. His communication with God was effectively cut off. That communication can only be restored through the new birth. Jesus, not being a son of Adam, was not born spiritually dead. His Spirit was a divine Spirit, and was alive to God from the beginning. That line of communication was never broken until Calvary. Then the Spirit that had always known perfect fellowship with the Father was suddenly cast into darkness and loneliness. The Spirit that had never experienced the inherited death of Adam's seed suddenly came face to face with the death penalty for the sins of all the ages.**

**We cannot know the depth of the suffering Jesus experienced in the spiritual realm. We can only speculate. But surely His suffering in this area was great, for His Spirit was totally pure, and there was nothing pure at Calvary.**

**Christ also suffered in His soul. The soul is made up of mind, will, and emotions. It is the seat of our intellect. It is the dwelling place of our feelings. It is the residence of the will. As we recall the words Jesus spoke while on the cross, we realize that His mind was alert until the end. In the midst of all the pain, He refused the solution of gall and vinegar that might have deadened His mind and eased the agony. He chose to remain in control of His faculties. It would have been impossible for Him to have gone through all that Calvary represents, totally alert from beginning to end, without having suffered great mental anguish. His mind, His intellect, was fully involved in the pain of the cross. You will recall, as well, that He cried out with a loud voice. Surely His emotions were involved, too.**

**He also suffered the loss of His will. He totally surrendered His determination to God the Father. He said, "Not my will, but Thine be done." All of the soul of Christ was involved. He gave Himself fully, mind, will, and emotions. His Spirit suffered. His soul suffered.**

**The body is the part of man we can see. We cannot see the spirit, though we may observe the results of its activity. We cannot see the soul,**

though we may see evidence of its existence. We can, however, see the body. As we consider Calvary we cannot escape the terrible sight of the physical suffering of Christ, the suffering He experienced in His body. He was stripped and beaten. A crown of thorns was placed upon His head. His beard was plucked out. He was abused. He was nailed to a cross, pierced with a spear, and left hanging, exposed to the elements.

All of this He suffered on our behalf. The prophet Isaiah wrote that He was wounded for our transgressions. There are five basic types of flesh wounds known to medical science. They are the contusion or bruise, the laceration, the wound of penetration, the wound of perforation, and the wound of incision. Jesus suffered each of these types of wounds.

## Bruised for Our Iniquities

Let us deal first with the **contusion, or bruise**. We read in Isaiah 53:5 that Jesus was bruised for our iniquities. It is remarkable that seven hundred years before Christ there was a man of God who understood that One would come to save the world, and that He would be bruised for our sins. Verse 10 of this same chapter tells us that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. In other words, God's love for us was so strong that He gladly allowed His Son to be bruised in order to save us.

A bruise, or a contusion, generally comes from a blunt instrument. That instrument may be a club or a clenched fist. We can understand, then, that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 26:67. For there we are told that the soldiers spat upon His face and buffeted Him. The word buffet means to strike savagely with a clenched fist. The Roman soldiers literally beat Jesus about the face with their fists until He was bruised beyond recognition. Prophetically speaking, Isaiah describes Him by saying that, "... his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14). He was so severely bruised that He could no longer be recognized as a man. Much of this terrible bruising came when He was beaten, buffeted, by His Roman captors. It was a bruising that He suffered and accepted for us.

## Scourging

The second type of wounds Jesus received was **lacerations**. We read in Matthew 27:26 that Pilate had Jesus scourged. Scourging is beating with a whip. When we look back through the Word of God, we read the words of David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, in Psalm 129:1-3. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made their long furrows." More than a thousand years before Christ was born, writing prophetically, David spoke of the men who plowed furrows in the back of God's Holy One. Before Rome became a world power, before the dreaded Roman scourge became a common means of punishment, God had determined the form of punishment which Christ would bear for our sins.

The scourging was executed with a Roman cat-of-nine-tails, a whip with nine leather thongs. At the end of each thong was fastened a piece of metal, glass, bone, or stone, As the victim was beaten, these sharp barbs cut deep furrows into his back. The Romans prescribed thirty-nine lashes upon the back with this whip, a punishment that literally tore the flesh away from the ribs and vertebrae of its victim. When Jesus received such a scourging, when He was wounded for our transgressions, He was fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and David. This is one of the reasons why we can have confidence in the Bible and accept it as fact. This is one of many instances in which a prophetic statement was later fulfilled in minute detail. Deep furrows were cut into the back of Jesus Christ, just as prophecy suggested. That beating was suffered on our account, and the blood which flowed from those wounds was shed to save us.

## Crown of Thorns

The third wounds Jesus suffered were **penetration** wounds. These were inflicted when a crown of thorns was placed upon His head. The type of thorn tree from which this crown was made still grows in Palestine. The thorns are long and sharp. Rather than receiving a diadem of gold, Christ was crowned with these piercing thorns. The soldiers placed the crown upon His head and pushed it down until rivulets of blood flowed over His face. They mocked Him and said, "This man says he is a king. Let's make him king." The crown they gave Him was a crown of mocking. However, in prophesying of the kingdom which we will share with the Lord Jesus, Isaiah wrote, **"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off"** (Isa. 55:13).

When He establishes His kingdom, Christ will eliminate those thorns forever. In the kingdom of God's pleasure there will be no thorns. That thing which became a mockery will be eliminated forever.

## Wounds of Perforation

The fourth wounds Jesus suffered were **perforation** wounds. After He had been brutally scourged, He was paraded through the streets of Jerusalem and led to the summit of Golgotha. There He laid on a wooden cross, and Roman soldiers drove heavy spikes through His hands and feet. They perforated the body of God's perfect man, nailing Him to the cross.

The cross was then erected for all to see. Christ was lifted up as a public spectacle.

Jesus said, **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"** (John 3:14, 15). In John 12:32, 33 we read, **"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."** This He said, signifying by what death He would die. When Jesus spoke of being lifted up, He spoke of being lifted up on the cross of



crucifixion. John understood this, and we must assume that many others who heard Jesus speak understood as well. He told Nicodemus that it was necessary for Him to be lifted up, or crucified, so that anyone believing in Him would not perish but would have eternal life. He also said that if He were lifted up He would draw men unto Himself.

The wounds of perforation, caused by the Roman spikes as they tore through the flesh of Christ, were a necessary part of God's plan to bring eternal life to mankind. He received those wounds so that we, by believing in Him, could have eternal life. Ever since receiving those wounds, He has been drawing men to Himself so that they might enjoy the eternal life He gives.

## Wounds of Incision

The final wound Jesus received was an **incision**. We read of it in John 19:33, 34. One of the soldiers took a spear and drove it deep into His side, just underneath the rib cage. His side was cut open, His heart was pierced, and all the organs and tissues surrounding the heart were opened. The blood that was to provide the salvation of the world poured from that incision and spilled on the ground. It was, as Judas Iscariot described it, the innocent blood. It was blood that was tainted neither by the inherited sin of Adam nor by individual sins.

Jesus was the Son of God and had received His sinless nature from His heavenly Father. He had lived a perfect life and knew no personal sin. His blood was truly innocent blood. More than that, it was the innocent blood.

Though we sing songs of Calvary and of the cross, we should understand that Calvary was a horrible event. Its participants knew nothing of the beauty sometimes attributed to it. It was a place of suffering and gory death. It was a place so gruesome that not even the light of the sun shone there for several hours. In the midst of it all was Christ. He was bruised. The Roman soldiers had beaten Him with their fists and abused Him. His body was covered with lacerations. The cat-of-nine-tails had cut deep furrows through His flesh until the skin

surrounding His open wounds hung like bloody ribbons. Penetration wounds covered His head where the Roman soldiers had placed a mocking crown of thorns and had beaten it down into His skin with a reed. His hands and feet were scarred and perforated with large spikes. In His side was a yawning incision from which poured an eternal river of life-giving blood.

His heavenly Father was there, giving up His Son, yet unable to look upon Him because of the sin which He bore. The Holy Spirit was there, drawing the attention of all men from eternity past until eternity future to the events that were transpiring. But most prominent in this scene of passion was Christ Himself.

Cruelty such as Jesus suffered seems beyond our comprehension. We may find it hard to imagine humans being so cruel to one another. Yet we must recall that man, without the indwelling Spirit of God, is capable of the grossest forms of evil. From the time that Cain lifted his hand to kill his brother, man has been hurting his fellow man. In addition to the suffering that we inflict upon ourselves, our world is filled with the suffering of disease and heartbreak. This is precisely why Jesus died. This is the reason He suffered. When He was wounded, He bore in His body our suffering for all eternity.

## Suffered for Eternity

In a greater sense, His suffering is not only an encouragement to us, it is the end of all suffering. Because Jesus suffered, there will be no suffering in eternity. If it had not been for His suffering, we would know the eternal suffering of hell. But because He suffered, we do not have to. Whether we speak of heartache, disease, or the pain man inflicts upon man, we can be assured that it will all be eliminated in eternity. And for the believer eternity can start right now.

Those who have had tuberculosis will receive new and healthy lungs. Those who have lived this life with the pain of arthritis will be relieved in heaven. The crippled will walk. The blind will see. The deaf will hear.

**We will be whole, but Jesus, throughout eternity, will have the signs in His palms and in His feet and in His side. He will be the only wounded and scarred person in eternity. We will forever be whole, because He will forever be scarred. We can know this is true because Thomas, when he looked upon the resurrected Lord, saw the evidence of His wounds. Those wounds are just as eternal as our salvation and healing. Of course, Christ will not be in pain. His pain ended when He arose victoriously from the grave. However, His body will bear the eternal reminders of the pain He suffered for us.**

**We cannot now see those wounds. Not even the most skilled artist can accurately portray them. The only evidence we now have of His wounding is His broken body and shed blood as presented to us in Holy Communion.**

**When we receive the bread, may we always think of the terrible manner in which that body was broken and the terrible pain that body suffered. When we receive the cup, may we always be reminded of the wounds from which His precious blood flowed. When we receive the bread, may we hear Him saying, "This is my body which was broken for you. Because I have suffered, you will experience eternity without suffering." When we receive the cup, may we hear Him say, "This is the blood of the New Testament which was shed for many for the remission of sins. This blood was poured out so that you might have eternal life.**