**THE LORD’S SUPPER**

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(Old Paths Advocate – December 2001)

Titus 2:7-8: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”

The faithful brother that serves the Lord’s table on the first day of the week should always use “sound speech” in the things he says and in his thanksgivings to God or blessing God for the bread and the cup of the Lord. “Sound” literally means healthy. Figuratively it means “true.” In other words, it is possible to use words that are unhealthy to the speaker and those that hear him when he is serving at the Lord’s table. The New Testament has given us enough information about how Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper for us to have a good idea about what are sound words and actions and what are not. Let us examine some of the complaints we have heard about what is said by the one serving at the Lord’s table. I am writing this to encourage brethren to study more about what to say and what to give thanks for at the Lord’s supper.

**ARE WE LITERALLY EATING AND DRINKING WITH JESUS?**

Mark 14:25: “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until the day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” This verse teaches Jesus literally drank of the fruit of the vine when he instituted this memorial feast. Combining Matthew 26:29 with this verse teaches us that he was referring to “this” fruit of the vine he was in the process of giving to his disciples. The word “more” indicates he had drunk some because you cannot have “more” without already having “some.” When the kingdom of God would be established, for at that time it was still in the future, Jesus said he would drink it “new” with them in that kingdom.

The kingdom was established on earth in Acts 2. Acts 2:42 indicates that the disciples continued steadfastly in breaking of bread- a phrase that is used to describe observing the Lord’s supper. In order to fulfill his promise to the disciples Jesus was communing with them but in a “new” way. He was not literally eating and drinking with them as he did at its institution. It was in another way and not in the same way. In Mark 14:24, Jesus used the word “new” to describe his testament. There was the old testament, but his testament was to be “new,” that is of another kind. In the communion today Jesus eats and drinks with us in a new and different way than he did when he instituted it. He did not explain how he would eat and drink with us in this “new” way. I assure you he knows how to do it. Some brethren say words when they serve at the table that show they think that Jesus is literally there and will literally eat and drink with us. Make no mistake about it – Jesus is there and eats and drinks with us, but it is in a new than when he did with the twelve in the examples we have. When we are observing the communion there must be communion with the members of the congregation in order to fulfill the teaching of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. By our communing with each other we show we are one. If we do not keep this in mind we could fall into the trap of some of our erring brethren who think they can take the fruit of the vine and bread and, as one described to me what he had done on an airplane one Sunday morning while he was flying, (when he should have been at church), just opened up the little communion traveling kit he carried and Jesus and he had communed with no other brothers or sisters present. Brethren, I do not see how we can do that. So, let us be sure and not say anything at the Lord’s table that could lead to such a practice. It takes Jesus plus the local congregation’s members to observe the Lord’s supper.

**SEPARATING THE CUP (CONTAINER) FROM THE FRUIT OF THE VINE**

We must be very careful about what we say concerning this lest we cause people to believe that the container separate and apart from the fruit of the vine stands for the New Testament and that the fruit of the vine separate and apart from the container stands for the blood of Christ. Note how Jesus kept these two things together when he instituted this memorial feast: Mark 14:24, “And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.” Also Matthew 26:28, Mark and Matthew kept them together. Luke and Paul followed the same pattern when they recorded the institution in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25. “This cup is the new testament in my blood.” The New Testament writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used a figure of speech that we call metonomy today in some the places where “cup” is used. Metonomy requires that what you are speaking or writing about must have at least two parts. These two or more parts must be so closely related that to name one part readily suggests the other. In other words, in the communion, the container and the fruit of the vine are so closely related to each other that when “cup” is used the contents come along with it in our thought. Note the phrases that are used by New Testament writers: ‘This cup is the new testament in my blood” and “For this is my blood of the new testament.” Jesus, by using these two phrases, clearly teaches that something he is giving to the disciples stands for the New Testament and something stands for his blood. Since he had the cup and was handing it to his disciples, that cup containing fruit of the vine stood for his blood and the New Testament which his blood ratified. If a brother mentions the fruit of the vine only he is doing something Jesus did not do in these phrases above. The cup by itself does not stand for the New Testament and the fruit of the vine by itself is not an emblem of the blood of Jesus. Together they are emblems of the New Testament in his blood or ratified by his blood. It is an error to say that the cup is the blood as some do. We can use ”sound” speech by using the words and phrases recorded in the Bible.

**BLESSING AND GIVING THANKS**

Matthew 26:26-27, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.”

In these two verses we are taught that Jesus blessed something when he took the bread but gave thanks for the cup. Is there a difference in these two expressions? There is a slight difference. Note that in verse 26 in the phrase “blessed it” than in the KJV “it” is italicized showing there is no corresponding Greek word. “It” leads us to believe that he was blessing the bread. If we leave “it” out as does the Greek then he was blessing God which I think is the correct interpretation. The Jewish people were used to the idea of blessing God. In Psalm 66:20 we have an example of this practice. “Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.” Also, you may compare Psalm 68:35. This was their way of adoring, praising, or thanking God for his favor toward them. At any rate, whether we bless God or thank God for the cup of blessing (Note it is blessing singular and not blessings plural.) And the bread we are doing just about the same thing. I think though that the word “blessed” indicates there is to be the idea of honoring and praising God in our thanksgiving.

Our older preachers, as well as those who followed them, taught us this simple formula for the giving of thanks for the bread and the cup of blessing.

“Father, we thank you for this bread which is the communion of the body of Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

“Father, we thank you for this cup of blessing which is the communion of the blood of Christ. In Christ’s name, amen.”

It would be difficult to go wrong if we would keep our thanksgiving this simple. That is not the time to be praying a general prayer for many different things or even thanking God for many other things he has blessed us with.

Brethren, when you serve at the Lord’s table it is not the time to go over the sermon or lesson given in the service. It is also not the time to preach another sermon. IT would be good to remember, according to Matthew’s record of the institution, that Jesus only used approximately sixty words to get his thoughts across to the disciples. I also do not think it proper to be too brief. Some say, “Well, we all know what this is for” and then they offer thanks. Some in the audience may not know even the basics about the bread and the cup. Just use common sense and sound words when you speak about it.