

symbolize, and represent the body and blood of our Lord. Also in the Supper when the participants commune together in the body and blood of Christ, they show that in their union with Christ they are united with each other. Although they are many members of the body, they all have one Head; and when they commune with Him in the Lord's Supper they also commune with one another. Believers need to see this and thus "discern the body". The believers in Corinth were not recognizing the true spiritual significance of the bread and the cup, and they were not manifesting the true spiritual unity of the body of Christ. As a result, their supper was not the Lord's Supper.

In connection with the question of a special blessing connected with the Lord's Supper, we must make a basic distinction between a Sacerdotal and an Evangelical conception of what happens in the Lord's Supper.

In a Sacerdotal conception the person officiating is a priest. God's blessing comes through him as a mediator, as a channel. God's grace comes down from heaven, flows through him, flows into the elements, and through the elements into the souls of the recipients. The participants are passive, and God's grace accompanies the elements as they partake of them.

In an Evangelical conception the person officiating is a leader and a minister. He leads the people as they participate together, and he ministers, i.e., declares the Word of God to them. The only mediator between each participant and God is Jesus Christ. There is no human being through whom the participant comes to Christ. Each individual has direct access to Christ Himself. The participants are active, and God's blessing comes to them only as they exercise active faith in the spiritual realities which the elements signify to them.

In the Sacerdotal conception the priest is all-important, and the focus is on him and on his actions. In the Evangelical conception Christ is all-important, and the focus is on Him and His atoning work.

In the Evangelical conception the presence of active faith is important. God gives us a word, a promise, a pledge, a seal in the Supper. By a visible word, a physical word, a word which is addressed to our eyes, He assures us of the forgiveness of sins. But exactly how does this work?

When we receive Christ as our Savior and receive His broken body and shed blood for our salvation, we receive the forgiveness of sins. If we have received forgiveness of sins through Christ's body and blood, then when we receive God's written Word to us we receive assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Likewise, if we have received forgiveness of sins through Christ's body and blood, then when we have received God's visible Word to us in the elements of the Supper, we receive additional assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Just as we receive God's written Word and are assured of the forgiveness of our sins, so we receive God's visible Word and are assured again of the forgiveness of our sins. As we receive the elements of bread and wine as symbols of Christ's body and blood, we receive God's assurance that our sins are forgiven. God in His grace condescends to our present physical existence in flesh and blood bodies and gives us a physical word: "This is my body . . . This is my blood." But this additional assurance comes only to those who believe His promise of forgiveness of sins through His broken body and shed blood!