

Biblical Topics

Sacrament of the Altar – Lord’s Supper – Use

Who receives this Sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.

To worthily receive the Lord’s Supper means that we receive it to benefit us in our spiritual growth. The unbelievers may also receive the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine, but, because they lack faith, they do not receive the blessings. Even more serious they will be “eating and drinking damnation to themselves.”

- 1 Corinthians 11:27, 29: ²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

If anyone remembers that he received the Sacrament unworthily, he should not despair. He should repent and there after use it worthily. Then he will be assured that this sin is also forgiven.

- Isaiah 1:18: “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

We should examine ourselves to see:

- A. Whether we believe that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament.
- B. Whether we are truly sorry of our sins.
- C. Whether we believe that Jesus Christ is our only Savior.
- D. Whether we have good and earnest intentions with the aid of the Holy Spirit to amend our sinful lives.

Believers whose faith is weak should indeed come to the Lord’s Supper. This will help their faith to grow stronger. A man either has faith, or he does not. Our faith fluctuates, it may be strong today and weak tomorrow. The weak in faith have a desire for forgiveness, but they lack the assurance of its possession. Nevertheless, the weak faith is a real faith. It holds as much forgiveness as the strong faith. The difference is that its hold on the forgiveness is not as firm. At that point they especially need God’s assurance of His forgiveness.

- Mark 9:24: Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”
- Isaiah 42:3: A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
- John 6:37: All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Much of the above information is taken from: "Luther's Small Catechism" annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.