

The Popish Mass and the True Communicants

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| Psalter | 65: 1 - 4 |
| Read | Hebrews 10: 1-18 |
| Psalter | 419: 2, 3 |
| Psalter | 384: 1, 5 |
| Psalter | 426: 10 |

Beloved,

We have come to Lord's Day 30 of the Heidelberg Catechism which we will read together:

Question 80. What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the popish mass?

Answer. The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshiped by us -but the mass teaches that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshiped in them; so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

Question 81. For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?

Answer. For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ, and that their remaining infirmities are covered by His passion and death; and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Question 82. Are they also to be admitted to this supper, who, by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?

Answer. No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles, to exclude such persons, by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, till they show amendment of life.

This Lord's Day deals with the popish mass and the true communicants. We will consider three thoughts:

1. The Difference between the Lord's Supper and the Popish Mass
2. Who are allowed to attend the Holy Supper
3. Who are not allowed to attend the Holy Supper

1. The Difference between the Lord's Supper and the Popish Mass

What is the difference between the Holy Supper and the mass? The word 'mass' is derived from a Latin word that means 'to send away.' Originally when the Holy Supper was administered the baptized members were sent away, and the administration of the sacrament took place after the sending away. Later the name 'mass' was given to it. Popish is not an abusive word: popish means of the pope. In the question our fathers are as clear and as accurate as possible. They contrast the Holy Supper as the Lord instituted it and the mass as Rome instituted it with each other. And in the answer they clearly explain what the differences are. They are clear and instructional in that. They are not just getting at Rome. They so clearly and objectively explain the differences that the effort to consider them for a while will be amply rewarded.

It is an answer in which the principle and the riches of the Gospel are proclaimed. Those who desire to preach about question and answer 80 are actually overwhelmed. The answer is so rich, that one can hardly do justice to every element that it contains.

Just consider the word 'full' (full pardon), the word 'all' (all sin), and the word 'only' (only sacrifice); further, 'once,' and 'on the cross.' These all contain such rich lessons that an entire sermon could be devoted to each of them.

The Holy Supper is an institution of Christ. When it is administered, the love of the Triune God beams towards us. He surrendered His Son to the shameful, grievous, cursed death of the cross. Also, the Son's love beams towards us. He submitted Himself to it. He desired to bear all our grief, He desired to carry all our sorrows. He allowed Himself to be bruised. He was numbered with the transgressors. What a love. And then the Holy Spirit: it is His love to apply to us what Christ has merited after the Father's good pleasure. Salvation is therefore of God, by God, and to God.

Salvation is based upon the only sacrifice of Christ because it is only the sacrifice of Christ that can please God. Upon that ground God was satisfied. In Easter the Divine 'Amen' sounded from heaven. Upon God's command, the grave was opened and the Mediator was acquitted from the proceedings of justice. Christ merited complete forgiveness for His entire Church by His sacrifice. That is what the Lord in the first place teaches and testifies to us in the administration of the Holy Supper.

What a distortion of the Lord's Supper the mass is. The mass denies the completed work of Christ. The mass teaches that the work of Christ is not sufficient. Man is put in-between. The bloody sacrifice of Christ is repeated in a bloodless manner, even for the dead. That is a denial of the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. But at the same time it is also an offence and an insult to Christ. It is a twisting of the Gospel. Is it then unbiblical when it states here that the mass is an accursed idolatry?

The Holy Supper testifies, in the second place, that we are engrafted into Christ. There you have the second difference between the Holy Supper and the mass. It concerns the communion with Christ. Our fathers have already dealt with that in the preceding Lord's Days so we will only mention a few key points. As bread becomes one with the eater, so Christ's life flows into His children. By that God's favour is tasted and by that God's image is restored in them. The communion with Christ, of which the Holy Supper shows us something, is a spiritual communion. The Holy Spirit works it. It is He who intimately unites the sinner with Christ and engrafts him into Christ.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. We can recognize the work of the Holy Spirit by that. He always works towards Christ. The Holy Spirit convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgement. It is not so that man will perish in his misery but it is so that a need will come for Christ. And when there may be a little knowledge of Christ, it is He who causes growth in that knowledge and grace. It is He who causes one to pray: "Oh that I may know Him and continue to know Him."

It is not just an unnecessary addition of what the answer says. Just read what it says: "And that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ." So the communion with Christ is a

spiritual communion. At the Holy Supper we can only behold Christ by faith, and when the eye of faith may be opened, we see Jesus crowned with glory. Then we do not see Him in His humiliation anymore, but we see Him in His exaltation. Just listen: "Who according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father." Then we see Him sitting with His Father on His throne.

What a comforting sight that is. Then the true communicants may rest and lean upon the completed work of Christ over which the Father Himself has pronounced His good pleasure. Then they believe that they, because they partake of that work of Christ, will one time also sit with Christ in His throne, as He sits with His Father in His throne. They see that He is at the right hand of the Father and that He there prays: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am." There He prays that their faith will not fail: there He prays for their gathering and for their protection. Therefore they will never perish, they will not die by the sword of the enemy, but they will live and be saved, because there is a living Saviour and He will not rest until all of them have been saved.

Beloved, then God's Church is pleased that He is no more on earth but that He is in heaven. We could direct you to the answer of question 49 where we are taught about the profit of Christ's ascension. There the issue is the joy of God's Church: the glorification of Christ.

But now look at the mass. In the mass Christ is pulled down. Christ is said to be physically present in the form of bread and wine. The wafer has become the body of Christ and the wine Christ's blood. The priest administering the mass, brings Christ down, he takes Christ away from the right hand of God. That is in fact lese-majesty! They drag Christ from His place. And not only that, they crucify Christ anew because in a bloodless way they degrade the bloody sacrifice of Christ. They are the ones who nail Jesus Christ to the cross again.

Rome says that communion with Christ can be effected without the work of the Holy Spirit: it is to be had by eating Him. Literally! But in that manner Christ comes into their stomach instead of their heart and they do not need the ministration of the Holy Spirit. The judgment that our fathers here pronounce over this gross error is not too sharp. When it comes to the point, the entire popish mass is brute heathenism.

But yet, there are many who in their train of thought are the same as Rome. How many there are who in the practice of their life are Romish? Just look around you. What a throng there is towards the Lord's Supper. Remarkable! And what activity around the Lord's Supper. Everyone is busy with the Lord's Supper, young and old. It almost looks like the Lord's Supper is some means of magic - it is said with reference. It looks like one can be converted at the Lord's Supper. It looks like one can enter heaven by attending the Lord's Supper, or that one can be reconciled with God by attending. It looks like the Lord's Supper imparts grace. That is purely Romish.

There are also people in our midst who attend the Lord's Supper and then think that all is well with them because they have attended the Lord's Supper. That is purely Romish. That is an accursed idolatry! Because that piece of bread does not do anything, that sip of wine does not do anything: it is normal bread and normal wine that do not change into the body and blood of Christ. And even if they would change, then at the most you would only have Christ in your stomach: but that is not where He needs to be. He needs to come into your heart and life.

It is not too sharp, beloved. It is so necessary that all the emphasis is laid upon it. Oh, it is to be feared that many communicants do not eat anything more than a piece of bread and do not drink anything more than a sip of wine. Man imagines to be converted and on the way to heaven. They even dare to call God their Father. I fear for you. Because truly, that is the practice of Rome. When you attend the Lord's Supper without partaking of Christ, then you eat and drink judgment to yourself. Then the sitting at the table of covenant will come back to you, then that will testify against you in the great day of days. We need to be cautious with ourselves.

Beloved, what a great difference there is between the Lord's Supper and the mass. With the mass, man does it all: with the Holy Supper, the Lord does it all. Also in regard to the

incorporation. We have said it already: there are many Romish people even though they call themselves Reformed. Romish in their doing and thinking. We work that incorporation ourselves, we calmly attend the Lord's Supper, eat the bread and drink the wine and say: "We also belong to the Lord's people." But you only harm yourselves; God's favour does not rest upon it.

With the mass Christ is pulled down from above. He is dethroned and dishonoured. In the Lord's Supper Christ is enthroned and honoured. The Holy Spirit draws a sinner above. He draws the sinner on high. He pulls him towards heaven. He makes him consider the things that are above. With respect to His human nature, Christ is no longer on earth but in heaven at the right hand of God the Father.

What is the fruit of attending the Holy Supper by faith? Worship. The administration of the Holy Supper leads to the worship of Christ. That is the third difference between the Lord's Supper and the mass.

We read in the Catechism: "And will there be worshipped by us." In the mass He is to be worshipped in the form of bread and wine. As soon as the Romish priest administering the mass has changed the wafer into the body of Christ, he causes a bowing of the knees for the Christ-become wafer: for a piece of bread! Then he shows that wafer to the congregation and says: "See the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." How is that possible? He shows the wafer to the congregation as if it was Christ! What a dreadful, cursed idolatry. There he kneels before a wafer, before a piece of bread.

How different it is with the Lord's Supper. There is also kneeling, there the heart fills with worship, because it is filled with the reflections of salvation. Then man kneels before the blessed Lord Jesus who is in heaven. When God's children may look upon Him and understand the message of the signs of the Lord's Supper, then they sink away in amazement. When the bread is broken before their eyes then they see what He desired to do for their sins. Because as the bread is broken, so He allowed Himself to be broken. Oh, the Blessed Son of the Father desired to become a curse. Paul writes to the Galatians: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." So the cursed of the Father would become the blessed of the Father.

Then there is a worshipping amazement in the heart. These people see all their salvation in Christ's deep humiliation. They also see in Christ's suffering the deepest revelation of His love. When they, with the eye of faith, may look upon the signs in the Lord's Supper in that manner, the signs themselves fall away, while the intended issue remains. Then they see no one but Jesus alone. Then they draw out of His fullness and they actually receive grace for grace. Then by faith they eat His flesh and they drink His blood. Then they say: "His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed." Then the Lord's Supper is a meal of joy. Then they see how great a price He has paid for their debt.

At the Holy Supper God says: "This has been paid for your debt." At the Lord's Supper they are given to see their debt as paid debt. There they are given to see their sins as reconciled sin. The deeper they know their debt, the greater their joy is at the table of the covenant. The more of their debt they see by the revealing light of God's Spirit, the more amazement there is in their heart that He paid that great debt, that He reconciled all their sins. Then there is great joy. Oh, what a wonder it is to experience that God's wrath has been appeased: then there is peace with God.

The highest testimony of thankfulness at the Lord's Supper is found with those who are given to understand the significance of the Lord's Supper by faith. When the Holy Spirit sprinkles Christ's blood upon the soul so that they know its liberating and reconciling power, the expression of their heart is:

Thou, O Jehovah, in Thy sovereign grace,
Hast saved my soul from death and woe appalling,
Dried all my tears, secured my feet from falling. *and*

Lo, I shall live and walk before Thy face.

See, that is what in the beginnings is experienced at the administration of the Lord's Supper. The beginnings of that salvation are already so great here; what will it then soon be when what is here known in the beginnings will there be enjoyed in perfection. There are no words to describe that. Then the song of Moses and the Lamb is sung. There God's justice and grace are sung. There is sung about the way that God provided for sinners to be saved in the full glorification of all of God's attributes.

And because all of that is missing in the popish mass, it is essentially nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ: as if that still needed to be added to, as if God was not satisfied with it. Therefore it is a cursed idolatry. Tell me: is that judgment too hard? Is that judgement too sharp? To the contrary.

2. Who are allowed to attend the Holy Supper

The question: "For whom is the Lord's supper instituted?" is to be dealt with here. Who are expected at the table of the Lord, who are invited? That is the most important question. Because we can be orthodox in doctrine and sound in confession, but yet this question needs to be crucial for us. Do I know experimentally in my heart something of what I confess with my mouth?

It is just this question that many ignore. Many occupy themselves with being orthodox with the doctrine; they know exactly how everything must go. They are quick to criticize but they forget life's most essential question: "My soul, do you know your destiny? How will you appear righteous before the Lord?" That is why it is profitable to consider this question of the Catechism.

"For whom is the Lord's supper instituted?" The answer is not vague. Three characteristics are mentioned. These characteristics align with the three parts of the Catechism. The first characteristic aligns with the first part of misery: to be truly sorrowful because of their sins. The second characteristic aligns with the part of redemption when it says that they are given to believe that their sins are forgiven them for the sake of Christ. The third part deals with thankfulness: the heartfelt desire to live according to God's holy law. You can examine yourself considering these three issues. We need to become acquainted with our sin: we need to see who we have sinned against, namely against God. And when we begin to see our sin in the right way, it will be accompanied with sorrow and the fruit will be that that we begin to loath ourselves and to abhor ourselves. That is contrasted with being pleased with ourselves. By nature we are pleased with ourselves but by grace we abhor ourselves.

To abhor yourself really means that you hate yourself; then you loath yourself. Most of the time we loath others, we sometimes hate somebody else, but that is because we do not see ourselves as God does. We know ourselves so little, otherwise we would have enough with ourselves and we would detest ourselves before God in dust and ashes.

You can feel it, these people do not walk around proudly; they do not become great. Oh no, they have to accuse themselves because they are not what they should be or how they desire to be. They abhor themselves because they have such a proud existence, because they are so prayer-less, so hard of heart, and that they can so easily live without the Lord. They abhor themselves because they abhor themselves so little. This characteristic is an enduring characteristic of all God's true people. They never come to an end with that.

Just think of Paul, who having come to the end of this life abhorred himself and called out: "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Certainly, he also knew something of the other parts which is why he continued: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But the loathing of self remained a constant reality.

But someone could ask: "May someone partake of the Lord's Supper when he knows that he is so sinful?" Beloved, self-abhorring is more than having some knowledge of sin. Do not forget that Cain also had knowledge of sin, even a living awareness of sin. Do not forget that

Saul, Ahab, and Judas all had an awareness of sin; but with all these people there was no self-loathing, despite their understanding of sin. We will all agree that we are sinners, but by nature we remain cold and unaffected by it, it does not touch us in our heart, it does not come to a right knowledge of sin or an acquaintance with the evil of our heart, even when we say that we are sinners.

But God brings His true people to that place. David said: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." He was loathing himself before God's countenance because of his sin; he abhorred himself before God's countenance. That can only happen when we see sin as it really is, when we see something of the God dishonouring nature of sin.

And then the issue is not even the dreadful consequences of sin - eternal perdition - but the issue is the essence of sin: God assailing, God dishonouring. That causes the head to bow and call out: "Woe is me because I have sinned like that." But when that is true we also gladly desire to be delivered from that sin. Not to gain an entrance into heaven or to be delivered from hell, but then we desire to walk uprightly before the Lord, because He is so worthy of it.

For whom is the Lord's Supper? For publicans who smite themselves upon the breast and consider themselves unworthy, unworthy of receiving even a crumb of grace. They smite upon their breast and call out: "God be merciful to me a sinner." I read that these spiritual publicans go down to their houses justified. But these people do not come so easily to the Lord's Supper. They need to be drawn there by God; God must give them the liberty. There are people who are eager to go to the Lord's Supper, but they do not know the publican's attitude. The publicans need to be drawn there by God: they do come but they do not come of themselves.

The Lord's Supper is for the poor, for people who lack all righteousness, who only have putrid shortcomings. Those who come with empty hands are filled with good. The true communicants do not approach so hastily; one needs to approach with empty hands.

Do you know something of that? It is so difficult to come with empty hands. I so dearly want to bring something with me, something that pleases Him, but then I stand in the way of my own salvation because as long as I have something, God cannot give me anything. God will fill the poor and needy.

The Lord's Supper is, as it has been read to us, for people who condemn themselves. Many convince themselves that they are saved, they talk themselves into it and refuse to ever be talked out of it. They say: "You are not going to take away what God has given me." But then I doubt if it was given by God. God's children condemn themselves. Therefore they come to the Lord's Supper, not as converted people but as people who condemn themselves. They must condemn themselves because God condemns them but they also approve God's condemnation and justify it. They are worthy of hell, they deserve death, and have forfeited life.

Do not be too quick to say that you have and know of this, because, beloved, in the actual experience it is not so easy. It does not just simply happen that one deems himself to be worthy of hell, that he condemns himself. That is all comprehended in the word, 'abhor'. The publican abhorred himself. Oh, that we would know something of that. The communicant who approaches the Lord's Supper in a worthy way must have experienced something of that.

But it does not remain with that. We read: "And yet trust". Do you notice how the one is joined to the other? It is not so that you can say: "Well yes, I know something of that first part, but of that second and that third, no, that is more difficult". The Catechism binds them closely together: "Sorrowful, (abhorring) but yet trusting." You cannot loath yourself before the countenance of God because of your sin without that trust. That trust belongs to it! But, may you then believe that your sins are forgiven?

You might say: "Yes, that is exactly the stumbling block: could I but believe that the righteousness of Christ were mine, could I but appropriate the Lord Jesus by faith. Could I but own Him. Once there was some hope in my heart, I was once gladdened, but I lack the trust that I have become the possession of Another, and that is the mark of grace that is referred to here."

Is the Lord's Supper then only for those who have been assured of the forgiveness of their sin in the blood of the Lord Jesus? I do not think so. But I do think that all the communicants, all those who have been worked upon by God's Spirit, hunger for that assurance. However, I do not think that they all have that assurance. For that matter, the Lord's Supper is not just for those with a strong faith, not only for those who have advanced in grace, it is also for those who are of little faith. Just read it in the Form for the administration of the Lord's Supper. There it emphatically says: "But this is not designed (dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord), to deject the contrite hearts of the faithful."

The faithful can be so dejected and doubt can depress them so much, "As if none might come to the supper of the Lord but those who are without sin." Faith may be so small that the fruit of assurance is missing.

Beloved, the issue is not a strong faith or a great faith, but the true faith. True faith is a faith that seeks refuge. True faith does not seek or expect anything from self, but from Another. "My hope is in Thee." Then it may well be that the assurance of faith is missing; that we are not really a partaker of Christ's blood, yet there are the longings of faith that go out to Him. Then Christ is not a Stranger to us.

When we really learn to see our sin as God sees them, as they essentially are, then we need a Redeemer for our sin. Then there are exercises of faith regarding such a Redeemer. And when we need to condemn ourselves before God's holy countenance, there something of the salvation that there is in Christ is also revealed. That gives hope and courage. That gives exercises at God's throne of grace that He would be pleased to reveal His Son in us. That is the evidence that the first part is truly found in us. No, these people cannot endure in their misery but they long for the redemption. When the Lord's Supper is administered, and the eyes of faith in these people may be opened for what occurs at the table, when the bread is broken and the wine is poured out, when the means of salvation are explained to them and they are directed to the precious ransom that has been paid, when they are directed to the blessed Saviour who has come to seek and save sinners who could never save themselves and who could never restore themselves to the state in which they once were, then see, they will sit there with a longing heart and a burning soul. Then they are as it were drawn and allured by the Lord Himself to the table.

And then how often it may turn out well when they, abhorring themselves, but hoping upon God's grace, may cast themselves at His feet. Then it may happen that they are no longer burdened by their guilt, that the guilt is covered by the blood of the Lamb. Then they may taste a sweet comfort and believe that the Lord will no longer enter into judgement with them. Then at times they sing: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

Oh beloved, consider carefully, the comfort of the reconciliation of our sins we must not bring to the Lord's Supper, but we may take it from the Lord's Supper. That is the fruit of the true partaking of the Lord's Supper. The abhorring of ourselves does not only work a sorrow, but at the same time a hope that God works, as He unlocks to us the Gospel and lively exercises with Him who is the content of the Gospel are aroused.

And then comes the third fruit of faith: "And who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened and their lives more holy." Thus that belongs to it as well. When this third is not present, the first and the second were not true. Therefore God's true people need to struggle with a weak faith to the day of their death. Until their death they desire to have their faith strengthened, until their death they hunger after the living exercises of faith. They desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. It is not possible for these people to be satisfied with themselves, because there is always more, much more to be obtained than what we have seen or received.

The Catechism says 'earnestly desire', and 'more and more'. More and more they become humble Christians; more and more they loath themselves, more and more they abhor themselves. More and more they see their sin, but they also see more and more the riches that

there are in Christ. More and more they are amazed about the fullness of grace that there is in Christ Jesus. Therefore they also desire to more and more improve their lives.

God's children are never passive, that is not possible. God does not make passive people; that is what we do. But God's children press on towards perfection even though they can never attain that in this life.

God is so worthy of it and the love of Christ compels them. They are not concerned with their own salvation in the first place, but they are concerned with the honour of God. That is why they desire to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. When communion with God is our greatest treasure it will become apparent in our walk and talk. The exercises of our heart are revealed by our words and deeds. It is to be seen in our personal, domestic, and official lives. There may not be any difference between our personal and public life. We can cloak ourselves with a veneer of saintliness but it is very possible that others will say: "You should see that person at home; there the reality of his life is evident." But when the fear of the God fills our heart we are no different at home than on the street, and then we are no different on the street than we are in church. Then the fear of God places a mark upon our life. Then it is to be seen that our heartfelt desire is to improve our lives more and more.

That means we will commit less sin but yet become greater sinners. Because the more we improve our life, the more reasons we will discover to abhor ourselves. Then I return to the first part. Because the more we see ourselves as God sees us, the more we are convinced of our unconformity to His image. There will never come a time that we can be satisfied with ourselves, but it is so that we will abhor ourselves more and more. That abhorring of ourselves binds us more and more to Christ and that alliance with Him sets a mark upon our life. The one cannot be separated from the other. Those who know something of these three issues are allowed to attend the Lord's Supper.

3. Who are not allowed to attend the Holy Supper

The Catechism speaks about hypocrites, and those who do not turn to God with sincere hearts. These people eat and drink judgment to themselves. They are people who really should not attend. Not that it is good then, because man can also bring a judgement to himself by staying away: man can also hear a judgement to himself, attend church to a judgement to himself. But however that may be, they are not to reach their unclean fingers out to the bread of the children. The hypocrites are the imposters, the actors. They wear a mask so that they look like someone else. They also act as if they are someone else. They act as if they are another; they modify their voice and assume various mannerisms of another person. They copy someone else just as an actor does.

Hypocrites in God's church are people who pretend conversion: they act as if they serve God, they act as if they believe in Christ. They often lead an irreproachable life, that is true; they act as if they abhor themselves. They act as if they seek the life in Christ. They pretend a sorrow for God because of sin; they pretend to have a heartfelt joy in God through Christ. But, it is fake! In reality it is not there, only the pretence is there.

They also have a certain intention with it. They want to be included in the circle of God's children. They want to be esteemed and extolled by people. That is sufficient for them. And sometimes they succeed in it too. Sadly many of God's children have little discerning knowledge. The discerning knowledge, as the old exercised people had, is hardly there anymore today.

Man should sorrow about the children of God who haphazardly lay their hands on everyone and are so quickly influenced when they see a tear or hear a sigh, as if they were signs of truth. They need to be careful because of the harm they bring about by setting someone on a throne, while there is not one single reason to do that. That is so dangerous. While God's children do it with the best of intentions (from a compassionate heart) it only has dismal consequences, because these people, more and more, think that all is actually well with them,

while it is not well. It is exactly these people, whose purpose it is to receive the confirmation of others, who are often satisfied with it. They can miss God's communion so easily.

Beloved, we can deceive people, we can deceive God's people, we can deceive God's servants, but not God! We have to give account to that God. How necessary it is to earnestly warn just these people: be careful that you do not eat and drink judgement to yourselves. It is to be feared that some communicants are only busy, not to strengthen their belief, but to strengthen their unbelief, their false faith. At the Lord's supper they only tighten their bonds, they become ever more convinced that all is well with them, while at one time they will be separated from God's children. Soon the difference will become evident, and many of the first shall become the last, and the last first. That is why we need to warn you earnestly. It will be terrible when you soon need to hear from God's mouth: "I never knew you."

When there is something that God's children are afraid of, then it is this. Oh, the fear for self-deception. When conviction and discernment are preached, it is just they who include themselves. They would abstain from the table because of it, and those who the preacher tries to keep away from the table for their own benefit, still come. When they notice they are intended, that one does not believe them, they become angry. Then they would be inclined to withdraw their membership, while one only seeks their salvation.

It is not so that we must say: "I hope that there will be as few communicants as possible." Because I truly wish that the entire congregation could and would attend the Lord's Supper. Nothing would please me more than that: but then in truth. What profit do we gain when deceiving ourselves and others? How strange it is that just in a time of compromise, confusion, and superficiality, in a time of so little spiritual life, that there are so many communicants. Is that not remarkable? It is enough to cause one to shudder.

An exercised servant of God once said: "The devil has converted more people than God." Consider well that there is written for everyone's warning regarding the end of days that the devil will display himself as an angel of light. He is the prince of darkness, a liar, and a murderer, and now he who loves darkness, comes as an angel of light. He who eschews the truth, comes with the Bible under his arm. He gives texts and psalms and works upon your feelings and even causes you to cry. And when you think that all is well with you, he is satisfied. The devil gladly permits you to attend the Lord's Supper, he gladly allows you to think that all is well with you, as long as you go lost. He does not intend your profit. How serious the times are in which we live.

We said it already, no one is more afraid of this than God's children. Oh, when they hear all this, they shudder in their pew. Then *they* are intended. When you meet such a one and you say that you do not believe anything of them, then they do not become angry. They become sad and fearful and say: "Yes, that is what I have always thought. I have often heard that voice within and therefore, deal honestly with me. Just tell me how it is." They desire to be dealt with honestly.

We also desire to deal honestly with you, however painful it might be. We seek your profit. What would it profit you when we would encourage you when there is no ground for it? You would not gain anything from that, and neither would I. Then we would no longer be free of each other. We desire to seek your profit and at the same time to be free from the blood of each of you. That blood will one day be required of my hand, and woe to those who have preached the Word of God without discernment, who with their preaching have caused many to consider themselves to be converted and were strengthened in that thought. Nowadays that happens all too often. We desire to earnestly warn you against it, from the pulpit and at house visitation. The hypocrites eat and drink judgement to themselves. Let us now sing from Psalter 384, verses one and five.

1. O Lord, my inmost heart and thought
Thy searching eye doth see;

Where'er I rest, where'er I go,
My ways are known to Thee.

5. Search me, O God, and know my heart,
Try me, my thoughts to know;
O lead me, if in sin I stray,
In paths of life to go.

We still desire to say something about those who should be excluded from the table. We can be short because the next Lord's Day deals with it more extensively. The people who show with their confession and life that they are unbelieving and ungodly, need to be excluded from the table. So these are different people than the hypocrites. The hypocrites disguise themselves behind an attractive veneer and decorate themselves with a garment of saintliness, they push themselves into the circle of God's children and there is nothing to be noticed in their way of life.

But in question 82 other people are meant. These are people who have been born in the realms of God's church. They were baptised, they did confession of faith, but now in the practice of their life they depart from the doctrines of scripture. They reveal an ungodly and unbelieving life. The issue is confession and life. Regarding their confession they are unbelieving and regarding their life they are ungodly. The Form for the Holy Supper calls them: "Despisers of God and His Word." For example, they mock with God's testimony: the snake did not truly speak; Adam and Eve are not true historical people, and so on. They are only stories, only imagination. And that is taught by professors at various theological seminaries. They are people who regarding their doctrine are unscriptural. And yet they are defended. But now imagine that such people were found among us. Such people need to be excluded from the Holy Supper and censured. Such people need to be put under censure, unless they repent from their ungodly doctrine.

The Form for the Lord's Supper mentions with name: "Blasphemers, usurers, murderers, gamblers, drunkards, adulterers, thieves, and so on. These do not *fall* into sin, but they live in sin: they *persist* in it. Also these people are to be excluded from the table until they show evidences of improvement in their life. They need to be locked out with the keys of the Kingdom. Discipline needs to be exercised. And when that does not happen, God's covenant is profaned and God's wrath is poured out over the entire congregation. Then great darkness is the result. Then the preacher is not able to deliver the message with a blessing and it becomes evident in the congregation that God's displeasure rests upon it.

Just think of Israel. They were defeated before Ai: the cursed thing was in the army. God's displeasure rested upon them and that became evident. Then the Lord withdraws the lovely unction of His Divine Spirit. Then He withdraws the administering grace of His servant. Then God's disfavour, God's disapproval is noticeable. May the Lord preserve us from that. The next Lord's Day will deal extensively with how these people need to be lovingly dealt with.

We need to close. Do you know of these three parts: misery, deliverance, and gratitude? Examine yourselves honestly before God's countenance. Do you know of that self-abhorring because of sin? Then you need to know your sins and confess them before God's countenance. Then you must loath, abhor, accuse, and condemn yourself. And while man accuses and condemns himself there is still a hope in his heart that God is gracious. Therefore we come with the cords of condemnation to the throne of grace. That caused the publican to pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner." That abhorring of self because of sin is also united with a heartfelt desire to improve one's life and to live holy before God, to grow in the knowledge and grace of Christ. Do you know something of that? When have to say 'no' you are not permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. And whoever does that eats and drinks judgement to them self. Then you increase your judgment. But when you are not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper and need

to abstain, then a judgement is yet awaiting you, because it is to your judgement that you are not permitted to partake.

Have you ever seen it like that, that to not be permitted to attend is not something trivial, but that you need to sit in your pew as one who has been judged? Have you ever felt yourself as one that has been judged? "I do not belong to God's people, my portion is not with that people, my life is not as that people, I lack what God's people possess." Then they sit in their pew condemning themselves.

It is something, to have to abstain, to not be permitted to attend. How many can do that so easily. They are looking who attends and who abstains, and they have plenty to say about that when they leave church. But, who has sat in his pew to condemnation? Who has been convinced of that? Who weeps about that? It could well be a means to conversion when you learn to know yourself as an outsider. Outsiders can be admitted.

When you stand outside, beg for the convicting administration of God's Spirit that He would cause you to see who you have become in Adam. Then you will get a fright of yourself and you will end up in the dust. Then the lowest place is not low enough. When you would say to such a person: "Happily, you have experienced something of that," then he would say: "Oh, there in no one more unhappy upon earth than me."

Beloved, to become happy you first need to become unhappy; to become converted you first need to become unconverted; to be placed in, you first need to be placed out. To enter heaven you first have to become worthy of hell. And so we could continue. Blessed you are when you know something of that. The publican knew his hell-worthiness, but still he could not refrain from calling out for grace. And we read of him: "This man went down to his house justified." He was acquitted from his guilt and punishment and received a right to eternal life.

Amen