

I. Brief Review of All Scripture Passages Dealing with the Lord's Supper

A. The Synoptic Gospels: Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23.

- These passages describe the institution of the Lord's Supper

B. The Gospel of John: ch. 13:21-30

- This passage simply describes the betrayal of Jesus at the Last Supper, but says nothing about the actual supper itself.

C. Acts 2:42

- This passage tells us that the first disciples were devoted "to the breaking of bread."

D. 1 Corinthians 10:14-21

1. Paul teaches that the cup of blessing is a 'participation in the blood of Christ,' and the bread is a 'participation in the body of Christ.'
2. There is one bread (or meal), and so we who are many partake of the one bread (or meal).
3. Paul warns against participating in sacrifices of pagans which are really sacrifices to demons

E. 1 Corinthians 11:17-33

1. 5x Paul speaks about "when you come together" or "when you come together as a church" as the purpose of their assemblies. This "coming together" is for the purpose of celebrating the covenant meal of communion.
2. The problem: there is a division between the rich and the poor in society which is being mirrored in their assemblies. The rich are participating heartily (eating their own meals and even getting drunk) while the poor have nothing. The result is that the poor are being humiliated, and in effect, being ex-communicated from the Lord's Supper.
3. Paul then gives the stern warning, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body (i.e., the assembled church) eats and drinks judgment on himself."
4. Their current abuse is that this judgment is falling upon people in the assembly, such that some are weak & ill, and some have even died.

II. Examining the phrase, "For anyone who eats & drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

1. It is my personal opinion that much muddled thinking (and superstition) has grown up around this verse, usually because it is read out of context, and consequently it is made to say something that it never meant originally.

2. E.g., some people take the phrase, “discerning the body,” and insist that what Paul means here is that people discern the mystical presence of Christ in the meal over against, say, a Roman Catholic understanding of transubstantiation. Hence, children are incapable of ‘discerning the body’ because this requires certain cognitive abilities to think ‘abstractly’ that do not develop until their junior high years (this is the position of one of my seminary professors).
3. Some traditions establish ‘communicant’s classes’ for this stage of development because it is thought that kids at some arbitrarily defined age are *now* sufficiently mature to make a true decision to follow Jesus despite the fact that Jesus said repeatedly that little children can have true faith in him (Mt. 18, e.g.). Some traditions stretch this even further and prohibit anyone under the age of 18 from participating in communion.
4. To interpret the phrase, “**discerning the body**” correctly, we must look at the context.
 - a. Already in the broader context, Paul mentions in 11:17 the corporate nature of the assembled ‘body’ when he says, “Because there is one bread, **we who are many are one body**, for we all partake of the one bread.”
 - b. After our immediate passage, Paul continues speaking about the body, this time in relation to the spiritual gifts, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit **we were all baptized into one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—all were made to drink of one spirit” (12:12-13).
 - c. Paul goes on in chapter 12 to mention this corporate nature of the body a dozen times in his illustration of the body & its parts, concluding, “Now **you are the body of Christ**, and individually members of it.
 - d. The more immediate context (11:17-34) deals with abuses of the meal, abuses in which people were left out of the meal b/c of economic standing, such that Paul described their assemblies as “for the worse,” as where “there are divisions among you,” and such that the rich are “despising the church of God” because they “humiliate those who have nothing.”
 - e. This is the context for the apostolic rebuke, and Paul’s instructions are given *to these people abusing the assembled body of Christ gathered together as the Church*. Paul is not saying anything about maturity, age requirements, or Calvin’s view of the Supper vs. the Roman Catholic view. His comments are directed against certain people who were abusing the Lord’s Supper thus “despising the church of God” through their divisive behavior.

III. The Issue of Frequency

A. Scriptural Considerations

1. The Scripture does not contain a verse that mandates frequency.

2. **Jesus says simply, “Do this, as often as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me”** (1 Cor. 11:25, e.g.).
 - [If you tie this into the nature of the Lord’s Day Worship as a *Covenant Renewal Service* in which God formally renews his covenant with his assembled people, the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper makes perfect sense as the New Covenant meal, especially in light of the way in which the Old Covenant meals point to this meal (& why we don’t observe the OT meals). See section C “Theological Considerations” below.]
3. **Luke tells us that the Lord’s Supper was a *regular* part of what the first believers devoted themselves to—at least as regularly as they devoted themselves to preaching, fellowship, & prayer (Acts 2:42).** “To break bread” is shorthand for “The Lord’s Supper.”¹
4. **Luke tells us that “on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them...” (Acts 20:7).** Interestingly, Luke could have said that they gathered together to worship, or to pray, or to fellowship, but it simply sufficed for him to say that they came together on the first day of the week *to break bread*. Already, the phrase ‘to break bread’ was becoming a summary phrase for the worship service.
5. **Paul clearly indicates that *the purpose of the weekly gatherings of the Corinthian church was to eat the Lord’s Supper.*** “When you come together...when you come together as a church...when you come together to eat...” (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 33). The context is their abuse of the Sacrament.

B. Historical Considerations

1. **The Didache was an early BCO of sorts dating from c. 50-150AD.** “On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins....”
2. **The Apologist, Justin Martyr (100-165),** records, “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read...bread and wine and water are brought...and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given.”²
3. **Calvin** in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, cites with approval a letter from Augustine (4th century) indicating how the Church sought to make it easy for folks to participate in the Supper, “Some partake daily of the Lord’s body and blood; others receive them on certain days; in some places no day passes when it is not offered; elsewhere, only on Saturday and Sunday; still elsewhere, only on Sunday.”³

¹ **Commenting on Acts 2, John Calving said,** “...it became the unvarying rule that no meeting of the church should take place without the Word, prayers, partaking of the Supper, and almsgiving” (*Institutes*, 4.17.44, p. 1422). **Author John Stott writes,** “...the disciples met on the Lord’s Day for the Lord’s Supper...And the evidence is that the Eucharist, as a thankful celebration of the now risen Savior’s death, very clearly became the main Sunday service...word and sacrament combined in the ministry given to the church at Troas...” (*The Message of Acts*, 321).

² Qtd. in Matheson, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper*, 292.

³ 4.17.45, p. 1423

4. **It is everywhere acknowledged that the Christians of the Apostolic Church through the early Middle Ages enjoyed as least weekly celebration of the Lord's Table.** It was not until the later Middle Ages that Communion became infrequent along with the growth of many superstitions around it. The Fourth Lateran Council of the Roman Catholic Church in 1215 finally required believers to partake once a year.
5. **As Presbyterians, we trace our heritage through John Calvin.** His view was that the Table should be set before the congregation at least once a week, or oftener if the Church assembles.⁴
 - In rejecting the decision of the Fourth Lateran Council (once per year)—a custom Calvin calls “a veritable invention of the devil”—he says, “It should have been done very differently: the Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.”⁵
 - Calvin asserts in light of the superstitious notions and ‘theatrical trifles’ that had grown up around the Eucharist which was corrupted by rust [i.e., negligence] in the RCC, “...to get rid of this great pile of ceremonies, the Supper could have been administered most becomingly if it were set before the church very often, and at least once a week.”⁶
 - For the church to be properly ordered, it “would be well to require the Communion of the Holy Supper of Jesus Christ to be held every Sunday at least as a rule.”⁷
 - “The Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians.”⁸

C. Theological Considerations

1. **God entered into a covenant of grace to redeem a fallen world from its sin and curse.** As this gospel creates the Church, God deemed it fitting that he affix certain tokens to his word.⁹ These tokens are the sacraments. “A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed and applied to believers.”¹⁰
2. **In our Calvinistic tradition, we have a rich heritage upon which to stand.** We reject the Zwinglian view that Communion is a *mere* remembrance of what Christ did for us (though it is that). We reject the Roman Catholic view of *transubstantiation* that view Communion as a *literal* feasting upon the *actual* body and blood of Jesus because the elements somehow transform into Jesus (though we do insist that we feast upon Christ spiritually). We reject the Lutheran view that Jesus' body is *physically* present everywhere the Supper is observed

⁴ Cf. noted Calvin scholar I. John Hesselink, “Calvin had such a high view of this sacrament and all its benefits that he thought it should be celebrated at every Sunday service. This was intolerable for the Genevan leaders who, under Catholic rule, had celebrated the sacrament only once a year! The result was a compromise resulting in quarterly celebration” (*Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, 152).

⁵ *Institutes*, p. 1424.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 1421.

⁷ *Opera* 10:213.

⁸ *Institutes*, p. 1424.

⁹ Calvin said, “If God chooses to add anything to His Word, it ought not to be regarded as a virtue to reject this addition as superfluous. It is no small insult to God when His goodness is despised in such a manner...Let us, therefore, learn to embrace the signs along with the Word, since it is not in the power of man to separate them” (cited in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of Word & Sacrament*, 239).

¹⁰ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, #92.

(though we do believe that Jesus is present with us). And we ought to reject by our teaching and practice the modern evangelical pietistic-individualistic view that Communion is *optional* to the Christian life.

- 3. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper does not convey or impart grace automatically or by itself.** Like the preached Word, the Supper presents Christ to us and must be received *by faith*. The Lord's Supper presents Christ to us in a similar way that the Word preached presents Christ to us. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, Calvin says, we really do feast upon Christ. The bread and wine "represent for us the invisible food that we receive from the flesh and blood of Christ."¹¹ Says one scholar, "...for Calvin the bread and the wine of the Supper are signs representing something present, not signs representing something absent."¹² What is this *something* present? It is nothing less than the person of Jesus Christ. "Contrary to much popular opinion, even in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, Calvin does *not* teach that the bread and wine are *mere* symbols of Christ's body and blood."¹³ They are *the means through which* Christ makes Himself present in a very real way among His people. "Since Christ himself is the reality...the signs are nothing less than pledges of the real presence. Indeed, they are the media through which Christ effects his presence to his people. The sign cannot be or become the reality, but it is not the symbol of an absent reality either."¹⁴
- 4. Hence, Calvin views the 'is' in Christ's expression 'this is my body' as a sacramental expression.** In other words, Christ joins the reality with the sign. The Roman Catholic / Lutheran error is that it takes Jesus' words *literally* rather than sacramentally. In this view, the bread and wine somehow becomes the literal body and blood of Jesus. Reformed teaching, on the other hand, can distinguish the sign and the reality so that we do not confuse them, but we do not divorce the sign from the reality either (the Baptist/ Bible church/ Zwinglian error).¹⁵ Thus, it is often said that the Reformed position teaches that *Christ is spiritually present* in the Supper. We can enthusiastically endorse this formulation as long as we do not allow the word 'spiritually' to be interpreted as 'not really.' Christ is really and truly present for us to feast upon. How does the Larger Catechism put it? "...the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with or under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper...yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to the outward senses..."¹⁶ The Westminster Divines followed Calvin and would affirm with him that "Jesus Christ gives us in the Supper the real substance of his body and blood," not corporally or carnally of course, but nevertheless really and truly.
- 5. So, why does God affix this token of grace to the spoken Word?** As noted Calvin scholar, Ronald Wallace, puts it, "Though the sacraments are ineffective without the Word, nevertheless the bare word cannot have its full effect without the sacraments."¹⁷ Allow Calvin to speak to this: "The sacraments are exercises which make us *more certain* of the

¹¹ *Institutes* 4.17.1, p. 1360.

¹² Keith Mathison, *Given for You*, 23.

¹³ Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism*, qtd. in Mathison, *ibid.* Emphasis added.

¹⁴ Qtd, in Mathison, 23-24.

¹⁵ The theological term for this is *sacramental union*. WCF 27:2, "There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified." Cf. WCF 29.5.

¹⁶ WLC, #168.

¹⁷ Ronald Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament*, p. 137.

trustworthiness of God's Word."¹⁸ "For by them He manifests Himself to us...and attests His good will and love toward us *more expressly* than by word" [i.e., by the word *alone*].¹⁹ But how does the Lord's Supper do this? Simply because the Bread and the Wine appeal to more of our senses.²⁰ In the preached word, we employ our sense of hearing primarily. But with the bread and wine, we engage all our senses. We *hear* the words of institution, we *see* and *behold* the physical elements; we *touch* the bread and the cup when they are given to us; our sense of *smell* is stimulated especially by the wine; we *taste* them upon our tongue and take them into our bodies. In short, Communion is an unavoidably and intensely experiential event, an event Calvin says he would rather experience than explain.

We could put it this way: we receive the same grace as we do from the preached word, but we get the same grace in a better way, or we might say, in a more full or complete way.²¹ In the Supper, we get to hear, see, touch, smell, and taste the Gospel, all by faith! Or to be even more blunt, for the one who has the eye of faith to see, the Bread is edible Gospel and the Wine is Liquid Grace.²² That is why Calvin can say unabashedly, "[God] nourishes faith spiritually through the sacraments, whose one function is to set His promises before our eyes to be looked upon, indeed to be guarantees of them to us."²³ Thus, the sacraments as "testimonies of God's grace" are "the pillars of our faith."²⁴

6. It should be noted that all Reformed Confessions from the First Helvetic Confession (1536) to the Scots Confession (produced under John Knox in 1560) to the Belgic Confession (1561) to the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) to our own Westminster Confession of Faith and other all agree with Calvin that we really feast upon Christ in the Lord's Supper.²⁵

Conclusion: More could be said here, but space doesn't permit much room. Let these lyrical words from Calvin suffice to conclude this section:

*"For whenever this matter is discussed, when I have tried to say all, I feel that I have as yet said little in proportion to its worth. Although my mind can think beyond what my tongue can utter, yet even my mind is conquered and overwhelmed by the greatness of the thing. Therefore, nothing remains but to break forth in wonder at this mystery, which plainly neither the mind is able to conceive or the tongue to express."*²⁶

¹⁸ *Institutes*, 4.14.6, p. 1281. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

²⁰ "Thus the sacraments confirm the word by making in more visible and concrete to the senses." Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, p. 138.

²¹ This is in no way meant to pit the Word against the Sacraments. God forbid! The sacraments are meaningless apart from the spoken Word, just as a wedding ring (a token of a promise) is meaningless apart from the spoken promise. Nevertheless, God saw fit to affix a sacrament to His Word *for a reason!*

²² Of course, such a formulation can be abused, and for the reason, I would hardly use this language. Grace is not a substance, but rather God's favor towards believers. The Supper does not convey grace automatically by itself. Calvin quotes approvingly Augustine as saying that the sacrament is "a visible form of invisible grace," one that "better or more clearly explains the thing itself" (4.14.1, p. 1277).

²³ *Institutes*, 4.14.12, p. 1287. Emphasis added.

²⁴ *Institutes*, 4.14.6-7, pp. 1281-1282.

²⁵ Not to mention the Puritans William Ames, John Owen, Exekiel Hopkins. Or Continental Reformed theologians Francis Turretin, Wilhemus a Brakel. Or American Reformed Thinkers Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, John Williamson Nevin, et. al. See Matheson, *Given for You*, chs. 2-4 .

²⁶ *Institutes*, 4.17.7, p. 1282.

D. Pastoral considerations for the practice of weekly Communion.

1. Weekly Communion serves to confirm and increase the faith of the saints weekly.

Calvin rightly insists that the sacraments “serve our faith before God.”²⁷ In fact, Calvin “assigns this particular ministry to the sacraments,” that is, they work for the “confirmation and increase of faith... They have been instituted by the Lord to [this] end.”²⁸

God himself affixed the Sacrament to be a seal of His covenant of grace to make his promise more sure to weak faith. When we hear the covenant proclaimed, when God renews his covenantal relationship with His church every week, we should have the covenant sealed, authenticated, and stamped with God’s signature. To this end, Christ instituted the Supper, as Calvin observed, in order to make “us *more certain* of the trustworthiness of God’s Word.”

Do we have people who need help in trusting God at his word? Do we have people in our congregation who are weak in faith and need assurance? Do we have those who are weary and faltering and need confidence? Do we have people who need to strengthen and increase their faith? Then why would we not want to take every opportunity to set the Table before them and invite them to come and gain assurance, confidence, and strength?

I am contending that the Word proclaimed in the weekly assembly of the saints necessitates that the Word be sealed with the Sacrament according to Christ’s institution. Why? To not do so would be like an agreement without a handshake, a graduation without a diploma, wedding vows without the rings, a birthday greeting without the presents, a victory without a celebration. While you could technically have one without the other, why would you want to? The two are meant to go hand in hand.

2. Weekly Communion serves to ensure that the worship service is Christ-centered.

With weekly Communion we will always be brought back to the basics of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for his bride. Even if the sermon is not ‘up to par,’ or even if the minister doesn’t preach a Christ-centered sermon, or even if the minister forgets the Gospel and simply gives a nice, moralistic message (may it never be!), we will still be brought back to the Gospel through the sacrament of the Supper. The minister will have to talk about Jesus then! As Calvin says, the Sacrament “directs us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to his resurrection, in order to assure us that, whatever the iniquity there may be in us, the Lord does not cease to regard and accept us as righteous.”²⁹

3. Weekly Communion helps to distinguish for our people the nature of Reformed worship.

Some Christians view the worship service as an evangelistic service climaxing in an altar call. Others view the service as primarily an opportunity for discipleship and thus the service climaxes in the message.

²⁷ Matheson, *Given For You*, p. 46, n. 178.

²⁸ Institutes, 4.14.12, p. 1287. The Confession speaks to this by saying that our “union and communion with him is confirmed” (WLC #168).

²⁹ Qtd. in Hesselink, p. 152.

Over against these notions, the Reformed understanding of worship views God as renewing his covenant with his people.³⁰ God calls his people to worship him (the call to worship and response). God graciously renews his people in Christ (the confession of sin & words of assurance). God gives his people his word (Scripture reading and sermon). God seals this covenantal relationship with his people by feeding them his covenant meal. And God calls his people to make offerings (prayers, tithes, alms). In other words, the climax of the Reformed view of worship as a covenantal renewal service is *the union and communion* of believers *with Christ* at the Table. This rich understanding of covenantal worship is weakened when the covenant meal is withheld.

- 4. Weekly Communion also serves to distinguish and elevate Lord's Day worship** overseen by the elders of Christ's church from other less formal gatherings of Christians, such as Bible studies, conferences, campus ministries, etc. These sorts of 'free-will' gatherings are helpful, but not mandated in the way the weekly services of worship are which are called by ordained elders for the Lord to renew his covenant with his bride. To ignore these covenantal renewal services would be drastic indeed, and the Scripture calls us to not neglect the assembling together *as the church* (Heb. 3:13).

It should also perhaps be mentioned that if Communion were less frequent, say once a month or once a quarter, it is likely that some may miss these meetings due to sickness, or traveling, or vacation, or even serving in the nursery. Thus, they would miss this means of grace and have to wait longer to receive its benefits. Weekly Communion serves to allow such persons to be brought before the Table more often, even if they miss a Sunday.

- 5. Weekly Communion is the way we visibly display our unity as the body of Christ.** One prominent way that Christians demonstrate their unity is at the Table of our Lord. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). This is the whole point behind Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians. They did not understand that the Table was where they demonstrated unity across racial, economic, political, and social lines. Instead, they used the Table for their own selfish ends not caring about their fellow believers. Weekly Communion, rightly understood, mandates that we reconcile with other believers before we come to the Family Meal.

In addition, the Table offers Christians an opportunity to openly identify with and bond with God's people in a special way. At the meal, we affirm that we are part of a community of faith. Weekly Communion would thus help guard against the rampant individualism of our culture that infects the Church today. We live in a day when the Church is viewed as unimportant/ optional to one's relationship with God. We rightly stress that Christianity is a personal relationship with God through Christ, but we miss that it is also a corporate relationship with Christ's body, his bride, the Church. Christianity is an inescapable social institution— instituted by Christ himself with very social sacraments. Weekly Communion thus teaches God's people about the importance of participating in corporate worship weekly.

- 6. Weekly Communion continually distinguishes Christ's Church from the world.** The first instance of this distinction is when we are initiated into the church through the waters of baptism. The ongoing distinction is made when the Table is fenced. *This is actually*

³⁰ Often referred to as "The Covenant Renewal Service." See the PCA's Rev. Jeffrey Myers recent book, *The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship*.

evangelistic! It gives the person who is not-yet-a-Christian reason to pause and consider where s/he stands in relation to Christ and his church “out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (WCF 25.2).

7. Weekly Communion gives particular meaning to church discipline.

In the PCA, we acknowledge that there are two forms of church discipline: (1) a temporary barring from the Table; and (2) a permanent barring from the Table, appropriately termed *excommunication*. The unrepentant are placed outside the Church. Surely barring one from the Table loses some of its sting if Communion is infrequent or rare. We are a communion of saints that assembles around the Table for Communion! Barring from Table fellowship in the form of excommunication is meant to be painful. Memories of life shared in the community of faith centered around the body and blood of the Lord Jesus are meant to haunt those who persist in rebellion and have been cut off from the fellowship. Weekly Communion reinforces this discipline. Certainly the loss of quarterly or even monthly Communion might not even show up on the radar screen of the excommunicated person as something of vast importance.

8. Weekly Communion underscores in a very powerful way the presence of Christ with his bride.

Our God is present in all places and at all times. But that does not prevent him from manifesting his presence in special ways as he so desires. No doubt, God is present in hell, but his presence is not felt nor enjoyed as it is in heaven. Likewise, though God is everywhere present in the world, he is nevertheless *with* believers in a special way, and he is with believers in a particularly special way as they assemble.³¹

God in Christ through the Spirit is especially present with us as we “come together as the church,” (1 Cor. 11:18) “for God is present in the company of the righteous” (Ps. 14:5). When we come together as the church, Christ has instituted a family ritual / exercise by which his special presence is especially manifested to us. *This is My body. This is My blood.* And as we have seen earlier, our faith is fed and strengthened by our feasting upon Christ himself. We could go so far as to say the Bridegroom meets with his Bride in a very special way at the Kingdom Feast which he does not apart from her.

9. Weekly Communion helps to guard against unrealistic or superstitious expectations that naturally creep into less frequent observances of the Table.

When the Bread and the Cup are rarely observed when the church gathers together, a strange expectation arises among the saints as to what should ‘happen’ at the Table. It tends to get overloaded ‘with unrealistically high expectations,’ or worse, we try to conjure up feelings or remorse or whatever. When that undefined expectation fails, Christians leave wondering why ‘it’ didn’t happen, whatever ‘it’ is supposed to be.

The simple fact that this is a *meal* that God sets before us is often lost on the communicant. It is often forgotten that we gather around Christ’s *Table*, just as the Disciples did on the night

³¹ We are familiar with the passage in Mt. 18:20, “Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them. What is often missed is that this text is embedded in a passage speaking about church discipline. The unrepentant brother is to be taken before the church, and if he still refuses to repent, he is then excommunicated by the church and treated like a pagan. This act of bind and loosing is mirrored by the Lord of the Church in heaven. What is important is the emphasis of Christ manifesting his presence *with the church* over against the unrepentant sinner: “For where two or three *come together* in my name, there I am with them.”

Jesus was betrayed, and Christ gives us *real bread* and *real wine* just as he did for them. It is a *real meal* suffused with the presence of Christ in a way similar to what it was like for the first Disciples. “By celebrating the Lord’s Supper each week, our expectations become *realistically* high.”³²

10. Weekly Communion enables us to be thankful for the Savior weekly in a special way.

The Lord’s Supper has received the ‘nickname’ of the *Eucharist* in most Christian traditions. This word simply means ‘thanksgiving.’ Jesus himself gave thanks twice during the institution of the meal, once for the Bread and once for the Cup. It was a simple prayer of thanks to God for these gifts he has given to his people. Do we have reason to be thankful to the Saviour every week? What better way to express it than to respond to his invitation to join him at his Table.

³² Rev. David Sherwood, former pastor of Christ Pres PCA in Flower Mound, TX. “Why Weekly Communion?” <http://www.christpresbyterian.org/library/communion.html>.