

~ Why We Use Unleavened Bread and Grape Juice ~

Text: I Corinthians 11:17-34 | I Corinthians 5:1-8

Theme: Leaven or fermentation are Biblically symbolic of sin and cannot represent the sinless Saviour.

Intro:

1. This morning we are going to consider the reason behind the use of unleavened bread and pure grape juice when we partake of the Lord's Table.
2. I will seek to build the case for this practice by following the natural progression in these 3 points:
 - I. What Does Leaven Symbolize in the Bible?
 - II. Was the Lord Jesus a Sinless Sacrifice for Sin?
 - III. What Do the Elements of the Lord's Supper Symbolize?

Main:

- I. **What Does Leaven Symbolize in the Bible? (I Cor 5:1-8)**
 - A. The context for the symbolism
 1. The Apostle Paul was writing to the Corinthian church to rebuke their open tolerance of sin.
 - a. The opening verse of the chapter tells us, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you..."
 - i. The Corinthian church was situated in a city which practiced sexual promiscuity on a level far above the majority of the civilised world of their day.
 - In fact, the word "corinthianize" means "to live a promiscuous, dissolute, or sexually immoral life."
 - ii. The problem in the church at Corinth was that it had become common place for their members to commit sexual sins, and they even took pride in their tolerance of sin, believing that it was a good thing to emphasise grace over judgement of sin. (Vs 2a)
 - iii. They had become so tolerant of sin in the church that Paul says their fornication was taken to a degree that even the gentiles would disapprove. (Vs 1b)
 - b. The Corinthian church had been founded by the Apostle Paul on one of his missionary journeys and he had a very strong connection with this church.
 - i. Who better, then, to rebuke this church than the Apostle who founded it? This is the context for these verses.

B. The meaning in the symbolism (Vs 6 - 8)

1. Paul compared the sin in the church with leaven in bread dough.
 - a. The sin in the church at Corinth had polluted the entire church, even though not all members had participated in it.
 - i. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Although the sin of fornication was commonly reported or well known, Paul still takes the illustration back to the smaller degree and says, even a little bit of sin has a contaminating effect on the local church body.
 - ii. Paul is very clearly using leaven symbolically to picture the manner in which sin affects our lives and the life of the church.
 - iii. In the Bible, leaven is the fermented starter that causes microorganisms to ferment in dough, causing it to change and spread through the dough. (Today we use yeast.)
 - The illustration of this fermentation pictures the corrupting effect of sin.
 - Bear this in mind, because it is the fermentation process that also makes wine alcoholic.
 - b. It is important to know that, when leaven is used symbolically in the Bible, it almost always pictures sin or false teaching.
 - i. **I Cor 5:6b** “...A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”
 - ii. **Mar 8:15** “And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.”
 - iii. **Lev 2:11** “No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven:...”
 - iv. **Exo 34:25** “Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven;”

II. Was the Lord Jesus a Sinless Sacrifice for Sin? (Vs)

A. Was the Lord Jesus crucified for our sins?

1. Does the Bible teach that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins?
 - a. Let's consider some passages that emphasize this.
 - i. **1 Peter 2:24** “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”
 - ii. **Hebrews 9:22** “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”
 - iii. **Isaiah 53:10** “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his

days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

- iv. **Romans 5:8** *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

b. These passages make it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified to pay the penalty for our sins.

- i. **Romans 6:23** *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

B. Was the Lord Jesus sinless in his death?

1. Was the Lord Jesus sinless?

a. The Bible very clearly teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ was the sinless Son of God.

- i. **2 Corinthians 5:21** *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*
- ii. **1 Peter 3:18** *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*
- iii. **Hebrews 4:15** *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*
- iv. **1 Peter 2:22** *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”*

b. The Lord Jesus is the sinless Son of God.

- i. Even the religious rulers of Jesus’ day were unable to bring a genuine accusation against him, although they had tried to find fault in him many times throughout his earthly ministry.
- ii. In the end, their “witnesses” couldn’t agree with one another, their own accusations wouldn’t stick, and they had to condemn him on the sole basis that he claimed to be the Son of God, and equal with God the Father.

2. What if the Lord Jesus wasn’t sinless?

a. Guilty sinners must bear their own punishment.

- i. Consider the following verses.
 - **Romans 6:23** *“For the wages of sin is death;...”*
 - **Ezekiel 18:4b** *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*
 - **Romans 5:12** *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”*
- ii. These passages make it clear that all who have sinned will face their own judgement day. If you have sinned,

then you have your own sins to pay for and cannot then pay for my sins.

- b. If the Lord Jesus had sinned, he could not have died in our place as our Saviour, because he would have had to die in his own place for the judgement of his own sins.

Let me give you an example.

- Let's say you and I are both in a court of law and we have both been sentenced to life in prison, could I then take your place and serve out your life sentence on your behalf? Of course not, I'm bust serving out my own life sentence. Only someone who is not already under punishment can take your place.

III. What Do the Elements of the Lord's Supper Symbolize? (I Cor 11:23-26)

A. The Unfermented Bread

1. The Lord Jesus gave us the picture of the bread in I Cor 11:24 when he broke it and said, *"Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you."*

- a. The broken bread pictures the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- i. **Isaiah 53:5** *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."*

- ii. The bread is symbolic of the body of the Lord Jesus.

- The bread does not actually become the body of the Lord Jesus, as the Roman Catholics teach, but it is a symbol that we use in remembrance of the literal broken body of Christ.

- b. The broken body of the Lord Jesus was a sinless sacrifice and ought not to be represented by a fermented element.

- i. As we've already seen, the Bible consistently uses leaven, or fermentation, as a picture of sin or false doctrine. Why then would we use leavened bread as a symbol of the sinless Saviour?

- ii. Furthermore, it is clear from the historical setting that, since the Lord gave this ordinance to his disciples during the feast of the Passover, the Lord would have used unleavened bread.

- Exodus 12:19 tells us that the Jews were supposed to put all leaven out of their houses for 7 days during the feast period.

B. The Unfermented Grape Juice

1. The cup is the symbol of the New Covenant made by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is what atoned for sin and established the New Covenant of grace.
 - i. The book of Hebrews quite clearly draws the parallels between the body and blood of Jesus Christ and the Old Covenant sacrificial system that foreshadowed the Lord Jesus' death.
 - **Hebrews 10:19** *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;"*
 - ii. Hebrew draws the parallel between the rent body of the Lord Jesus and the rent veil in the Jewish Temple, as well as the parallel between the blood which the Temple high priest would carry into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle on the altar, and the blood of the Lord Jesus, by which we enter into the heavenly "holiest" (Vs 19) and there offer our prayer and intercession in the very presence of God.
 - b. The cup is the symbolic representation of the literal blood of Jesus Christ, offered once for all.
 - i. Again, we do not believe that the fruit of the vine becomes the literal blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ii. It is symbolic of something which already had a literal fulfillment.
 - **Mathew 26:28** *"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."*
2. The content of the cup ought to appropriately represent the sinless Saviour's blood.
 - a. The contents of the cup when the Lord Jesus gave the ordinance to his disciples was the "fruit of the vine."
 - i. **Mathew 26:29** *"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*
 - ii. Notice the Lord Jesus did not call this wine but rather the fruit of the vine, and then he stated that he would drink it "new" in the Father's kingdom.
 - The Lord Jesus gave clear indication that the cup he gave to his disciples contained fresh grape juice, not alcoholic wine.
 - b. The fruit of the vine ought to be unfermented.

- i. We do not use alcoholic wine to symbolize the shed blood of the Lord because alcoholic wine requires fermentation, which is symbolic of sin and false doctrine.
 - To make alcoholic wine, yeast must be present as a fermenting agent. The yeast feeds on the natural sugars in the grape juice causing a chemical reaction that produces alcohol, carbon dioxide, and heat.
 - I looked this up online and here is a direct quote:
*"There is no way to produce alcoholic wine without fermentation. So, from both a scientific and biblical perspective, **fermentation is what transforms grape juice into alcoholic wine.** Without fermentation, grape juice remains non-alcoholic."*
- ii. Before you say, "But the wine of the day would have contained alcohol," I know. Unless it was freshly pressed that day, the natural fermentation process would have already begun.
 - However, there were several methods used to limit the fermentation process to make wine remain fresh for longer.
 - The wine of the day was usually diluted to 1 part wine 3 parts water. This would have considerably lowered the amount of alcohol that might have been present.
 - The Jews were very careful in their consumption of potentially intoxicating beverages, because of the biblical commands against drunkenness.
- iii. It would make no sense for us to emphasize the fact that fermented bread is symbolic of sin in the scriptures and then to pull out the Shiraz and pour ourselves a stiff glass.
 - **Proverbs 23:31** *"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."*
- iv. The point is, today there is no excuse for drinking fermented wine. In the Lord's day, they used the fruit of the vine, and the best wine was considered the fresh fruit of the vine. Today, we have fresh grape juice in which the fermentation process has been intentionally prevented, so why would we go out of our way to use something fermented which breaks down the picture of the sinless Saviour?

Conclusion:

1. In this church, we use the unfermented / unleavened bread to represent the sinless, broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. We use the unfermented grape juice to represent the sinless blood shed at Calvary to make atonement for our sins.