

The Sacrament of the Altar (Part IV)

Who, then, receives such sacrament worthily? Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins."

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words *For you* require altogether believing hearts.

1. What preparation does Luther recommend, so that the Sacrament will be received by us to our benefit? Is it simply a matter of preparing once in confirmation class, or a lifetime pursuit?

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (V: Sacrament of the Altar)

³⁹⁻⁴¹ In conclusion, since we have now the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament, there is indeed need of some admonition and exhortation, that men may not let so great a treasure which is daily administered and distributed among Christians pass by unheeded, that is, that those who would be Christians make ready to receive this venerable Sacrament often... [T]here is a great multitude of such... go one, two, three years, or even longer without the Sacrament, as though they were such strong Christians that they have no need of it; and some allow themselves to be prevented and deterred by the pretense that we have taught that no one should approach it except those who feel hunger and thirst, which urge them to it. Some pretend that it is a matter of liberty and not necessary, and that it is sufficient to believe without it; and thus for the most part they go so far that they become quite brutish, and finally despise both the Sacrament and the Word of God.

⁴² Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should by any means be coerced or compelled, lest we institute a new murdering of souls. Nevertheless, it must be known that such people as deprive themselves of, and withdraw from, the Sacrament so long a time are not to be considered Christians. For Christ has not instituted it to be treated as a show, but has commanded His Christians to eat and drink it, and thereby remember Him...

⁴⁵ And we have, in the first place, the clear text in the very words of Christ: Do this in remembrance of Me. These are bidding and commanding words by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this Sacrament. Therefore, whoever would be a disciple of Christ, with whom He here speaks, must also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him...

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ But if you wish to be a Christian, you must from time to time render satisfaction and obedience to this commandment. For this commandment ought ever to move you to examine yourself and to think: See, what sort of a Christian I am! If I were one, I would certainly have some little longing for that which my Lord has commanded (me) to do.