

STRICT COMMUNION¹

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning June 5th, 1859²

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“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13

AS you are a Baptist, I wish you also to be decided for *Strict* Communion. Never give your vote for anyone to come to the Lord's table un-scripturally. Neither do you yourself ever sit down at the table, either with Independents, or with those of mixed communion; or where they admit none into the Church as members but by baptism yet admit others to the table. Stand clear of all.

1st, Because of the *importance* of conformity to New Testament *order*. Faith comes first; baptism stands next. Baptism is not so important, nor anything like so important, as regeneration, as living faith having living works; or, as redemption justification, eternal election, the truth of an everlasting covenant, with eternal glory. If baptism were as important as these essential truths, every heaven-taught man would be sure to be a Baptist. Baptism is in no way essential to salvation. It is not in the vital sense, an essential doctrine; but it is essential to right *discipline*. Nor because baptism is not essential to salvation, but only to Gospel discipline, ought we to make light of it; nor does the Word of God anywhere make light of it. Some have thought that the Apostle Paul did treat it rather, lightly when he thanked. God that he had baptized so few; but then he assigns the reason of this thankfulness; it was, lest any should say that “he baptized in *his own name*.”

It does not appear that the *apostles* ever made it a common practice themselves to baptize. Hence Peter, at Caesarea, did not himself baptize those who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; but “*he commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”

¹ A personal note by Richard C. Schadle: I have friends and fellowship with believers across different denominations. It is **not** my personal practice to adhere to Strict Communion. This is based on my own understanding of the scriptures on this subject (Especially from the book of 1 John). As with all matters of practical application each of us must prayerfully lay these matters before the Lord and seek to follow as our conscience directs. This article, along with all my website material is placed in the public domain so that all can have access to as much of what James Wells taught and preached as is within my ability to obtain and reproduce.

² This is when the sermon was first preached by James Wells

³ This copy of this sermon was published sometime after James Wells death. To date this is the only version I have been able to obtain.

There are four reasons which suggest themselves why the apostles themselves did not baptize, but commanded others to do it. First, because they were given up chiefly to the ministry of the word. Secondly, because of the numbers called at times by their ministry, that it would hinder a large portion of their time. Thirdly, because it was a matter so simple as not to require apostolic gifts to enable one Christian to baptize another. And, fourthly, lest owing to the greatness of their gifts, Satan should take advantage, and attach a superior virtue to the baptism performed by them; or, as the Apostle says, "Lest any should say they baptized in their own name." Although the apostles themselves did not, as a general rule, baptize, still they commanded it to be done; for they were not sent personally to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. And even the Savior Himself, though He Himself was baptized, yet He *Himself* did not baptize others (John 6:2), yet did He make baptism one part of the mission He gave to the apostles.

Do not then, make light of that order of Church government which the King of Zion has given. Surely, He is worthy of being obeyed; for "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; & stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:22, 23).

Keep then to *Strict Communion*. Not only because of the importance of conforming to gospel order; but also, because you *prefer* the word of the Lord, even before the most esteemed of your brethren in the Lord. There are some who are not Baptists, to whom I feel very much more union of soul, than I do to many that are Baptists. But still when I am called upon to decide which I will do, set those esteemed brethren aside, or set the command of their Lord and Master aside, I cannot hesitate which to do. I dare not *alter* the order of the Lord's house. It is my immovable decision, that the moment a person becomes an open communist, I do not say doing it once or twice, because it may be done under the impulse of the moment or wrong impression, but as soon as a person becomes a thorough open communionist his membership must immediately cease no question about it, I cannot, to oblige them, sanction their disobedience; nor, go into disorder with them. I must wait until they come into their right minds, and there I must leave it; and "go my way till the end be."

So then it comes simply to this: you must either set a child of God aside from the Lord's table, or else you must set the command of God aside. The one is *painful*, but the other is *sinful*: for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin". Abide then by Strict Communion.

Abide also by Strict Communion *for the sake of others*. A conscientious abiding hereby will do much towards bringing others over to order; but if we ourselves totter and stagger, can we expect to see others fall into our ranks? They may call us bigots, and a variety of other ugly names, and this will prove that they are angry with us, but it will not prove that they are right, or that we are wrong. The great thing for us is, to quietly, but firmly, stand practically by what we know to be the good and the right way.

Stand fast by Strict Communion *for conscience sake*, If you are placed where there is no Baptist minister that you can hear, and where there is no Church of New Testament order, then stand out; and rather than come to the table un-scripturally, come not at all. Be thus a practical witness for truth and order. Let conscience "have her perfect work," and take not the "Lord's Supper

unworthily, which all open communionists do, but “Be not you partakers with them.” Pay no attention whatever to the argument “that some of the best and greatest preachers we have had, were not even half-way Baptists, much less strict communionists.” This argument amounts to this, that as we ought to follow such men where they followed Christ, so, in consideration of their many and great excellencies., we *ought* to adopt their error also. Such a notion as this would at once set us on the highway to Rome. Just adopt Luther’s consubstantiation, and Calvin’s practice of persecuting men for matters of conscience, and we shall not be far from the kingdom of Rome. Adopt the old semi-arminian fathers’ duty-faith doctrine, and we corrupt the truth, and cover Zion with a cloud. “Be not you then partakers of other mtn’s sins.” We sin enough by infirmity, and from want of experience and judgment, without sinning willfully.

Until, therefore, another law be given from heaven, to sanction another way to the Lord’s table, be you steadfast, and unmovable, just where you are, go not you over unto them, but let them come over unto you.

I will here give you but one more reason for abiding by strict communion; and that is, *the preservation of the ordinances as they are delivered unto us*. One of the laws most emphatically given to the Israelites was, that they were in every possible way to teach their children the laws, and statutes, and ordinances, which the Lord had delivered unto them; and a substituting of other laws, in whole or in part, in the place of the laws of God, made their worship vain, and ultimately proved their ruin and dispersion.

If the ordinances of God had | never been perverted, Popery could not have existed, that exists in the name of Christ, Church of England-ism never could have existed, our land never would have been blotted and darkened as it now is with Nunneries, Monasteries & Convents.

The corruption of the essential doctrines has always begun with the corruption of the ordinances.

The truth of God in all its departments is the salt of the earth; and the people of God are the salt of the earth only as they abide vitally and practically in the truth. Apart from this, they are neither fit for the land, nor for the dunghill; not savory enough to be any use in the Church; and yet, with all their want of savor, they cannot hate the truth, and so are not fit for the dung-hill of this world; but in this their sad captivity are “trodden under the foot (not of God, but) of men;” but they shall be salted with the fiery heart-warming love of God, I and that by the power of the Holy Ghost.

If then, we would save ourselves from an untoward generation, it must be by abiding by the truth; and if we are “set for the defense of the Gospel,” let us defend it, and not corrupt it. It is only by abiding by the truth that we can serve God acceptably; nor can we get real good, or glory in any other way!

Thus, then, let the importance of abiding by New Testament order the preference of the Word of the Lord, a good conscience, and the preservation of the truth in its purity, have due weight with you, “Trust in the Lord,” and thus “do good,” and “you shall dwell in the land, and verily you shalt be fed.”

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