

“Live by Me”

February 5, 2023

As I was studying the scriptures from the Topical Guide on *Jesus Christ, Messenger of the Covenant*, I came across John 6:57. *“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”*

This sent me on a study of the sacrament to understand this scripture more fully and get a better understanding of what the sacrament should mean to all of us.

I will start by sharing the origins of the word sacrament as there is significant symbolic meaning that we can learn from.

“In Roman law, the “sacramentum” was a deeply sacred oath. In particular, it was the oath taken by soldiers, and especially by the newly enlisted, to be true and faithful both to their commanding general and, in the days of the Roman Republic, to the Republic itself. Later, with the rise of the Roman Empire, it became an oath made specifically to the emperor and renewed annually by all of the imperial armies. Accordingly, to violate the oath was desertion, dereliction of duty and perhaps even treason. In the ancient Roman conception, the sacramentum was different from oaths commonly taken in court and elsewhere. Most oaths were viewed as creating bonds between members of the earthly community; the sacramentum, by contrast, created a relationship between the human swearing it and the gods. The person who swore the sacramentum became, himself, “sacer,” something “given to God or the gods” or, in the related English word, “sacred.” In the Church today, the sacrament — and, thus the sacramental “oath” — is taken publicly. In principle, therefore, all who partake of the bread and water are publicly professing their intention to be faithful and obedient, to always remember the sacrifice of the Son, to acknowledge him as Lord. Happily, we are permitted to renew our pledge each week as we try to improve. And, even more happily, the Lord to whom we promise fidelity is a forgiving sovereign who, having foreseen our lapses, has already paid for them”. - Daniel Peterson, BYU religion professor (The Surprising and Meaningful History Behind the Word “Sacrament”, LDSLiving.com August 22, 2019)

This idea of making an “oath” each time we partake of the sacrament is reinforced by a comment from President Nelson at the 2018 Mission Leadership Seminar.

*“A thought has occurred to me that **my making a covenant today** is a lot more important than the message that I have prepared. I made a covenant as I partook of the sacrament that I would be willing to take upon me the name of Jesus Christ and that I am willing to obey His commandments. Often, I hear the expression that we partake of the sacrament to renew covenants made at baptism. While that’s true, it’s much more than that. I’ve made a new covenant. You have made new covenants. . . . Now in return for which He makes the statement that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. What a blessing!”*

John S. Tanner, the president of BYU Hawaii in an address at BYU Hawaii in 2018 reinforced this concept of making a new covenant each week even further.

*"We bear our testimony in every sacrament meeting and not only on Fast Sunday. That's because when we partake of the sacrament, we bear solemn testimony to God of our commitment to follow Christ. Hence, every sacrament meeting is also a testimony meeting. This is the implication of what the Savior taught the Nephites about the sacrament. Jesus said, "And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. **And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me**" (3 Ne. 18:7). When I partake of the sacrament, I try to remember that, in doing so, **I am bearing testimony unto the Father**. This has greatly enriched and deepened the impact of the ordinance for me. Note that nothing is said in the prayers, or elsewhere in scripture, about the sacrament as a renewal of a previous covenant made at baptism. To be sure, the covenants we make in these ordinances overlap. However, **perhaps we diminish the power and meaning of the sacrament if we think of it primarily as a renewal of a past commitment rather than a present-tense, whole-hearted testimony or covenant with God here and now!** For me, at least, the ordinance becomes more powerful as I regard it as my testimony unto God in the present. I am struck by the present-tense language in the prayers. In the prayer on the bread, we ask, we partake, we eat, we witness, we are willing, we always remember, we keep his commandments. The prayer on the water adds an emphatic "do" to the promise to remember: we "do always remember." The prayers thus invite us to be present in the ordinance; not just to remember or re-make but to actively make a covenant with the Lord." – John S. Tanner BYU Hawaii President, October 20, 2018, LDSLiving.com*

I love this concept of making a new covenant with the Father each week when we willingly and worthily partake of the sacrament. As we bear testimony unto the Father of our willingness to always remember His Son and His infinite sacrifice for each of us, the promise of always having the Spirit of the Lord with us takes on additional meaning.

Elder Dale G. Renlund framed the importance and value of the sacrament in these meaningful words, *"To draw closer to the Savior, we must increase our faith in Him, make and keep covenants, and have the Holy Ghost with us. We must also act in faith, responding to the spiritual direction we receive. All of these elements come together in the sacrament. Indeed, the best way I know of to draw closer to God is to prepare conscientiously and partake worthily of the sacrament each week."*

Now back to the scripture where I started in John 6, but this time let's read vs. 56-58, *"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him". As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall **live by me**. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."* (John 6:56-58)

Such glorious promises! To have Christ dwell in us, through the Spirit of the Lord which is promised us - if we will always remember Him and keep His commandments is significant. The apostle Paul knew the significance of these promises when he advised in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, *"... let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that*

cup.” whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Such a person “eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.”

May we prepare each week to make a new covenant with the Lord. May we do so worthily and with purpose and desire to testify to the Father that we are indeed willing IN THE PRESENT, to fully take the name of His Son upon us and keep His commandments. May we claim the promise of *“always having His spirit to be with us”* thus making it possible to accept His invitation to *“Live by Me”*.

All my love,

President Kunz