

The Lord's Supper

Preach The Lord's Death Till He Come

1 Corinthians 11:17 – 26

17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread:

24 And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

25 After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

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We have here perhaps the fullest instruction concerning the correct observance of the Lord's Supper that is given us in Scripture, as is presented in our King James Bibles. It is clear that it was intended to occupy a very large place in the hearts and minds of Christians during the dispensation in which our Lord, Jesus Christ, is absent in body, sitting on the right hand of the Father in heaven. It was intended to call Him very vividly to mind in order that His people might be so occupied with Him that, as they went forth afterwards in service, Christ Himself might be the joy of their hearts.

Apparently at a very early day Christians began to misunderstand the Lord's Supper, and that misunderstanding has only become more grotesque as time has gone on.

This section of 1 Corinthians provides us with evidence that man is not inheritently good; that man's heart is evil. It serves to prove what God had said previously about the heart of man and the righteousness of man. Everything God has given us has been abused by man. No physical appetites that He has given have not been abused, and there are very few privileges we have that have not often been misused and utterly abused.

An example of this is seen in the relationship of Israel with God. Under the law, God gave Israel the Sabbath, and you would think that men would have recognized this as a good thing. God was providing for our comfort when He said in Exodus 20:9, 10,

⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

But the Sabbath became a loathing to many people because they connected with it all kinds of laws and prohibitions which God Himself had not put upon it, so that our Lord Jesus had to reprove the men of His day by saying in Mark 2:27,

²⁷ And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

And so it is with other observances in Old Testament times.

It did not end there, however. The same is true in connection with the two ordinances of the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper and baptism. They were designed to continue in the Church until the end of the present age, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together with Him. But people either go to the extreme of making these ordinances saving sacraments or are inclined to become very careless about them. The fact is that neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper has anything to do with the salvation of our souls, except that they picture the way in which we are saved—through the death, burial and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that in our believing this. And yet they are of great importance because they help to draw our hearts out to Him and to give us a more vivid realization of our identification with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

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In the early Church the Lord's Supper was observed very frequently; for a time at least it was observed every day. In the early chapters of Acts it is set forth that they daily participated in the breaking of bread. Afterwards it was observed on the first day of the week, as Acts 20:7 would seem to show,

⁷ And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

I am sure that the more often we gather together "to show the Lord's death until He come" the greater blessing comes to us and the greater glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet in the early Church they fell into ways in which this ordinance was abused. The apostle Paul, for instance, writing here says he cannot praise them for the way they attempted to celebrate the Lord's Supper—"I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse." It is possible then even to assemble to celebrate the Lord's Supper and go away not benefited but rather harmed. How was it that they were celebrating it for the worse rather than for the better? In the first place there was a spirit of division working among them. Instead of recognizing that the Lord's Supper speaks of the unity of the whole Church of God, and that all alike participate in that one loaf and cup which set forth the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Corinthians were grouping together, in one place, it is true, but under various heads. Some said, as it were, "I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas" and some said, "We do not recognize these gifts at all, we are only of Christ." It is just as bad to make Christ's name the head of a party as any other name. Christ is the Head of all believers and not merely of some little group. "When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved (of yourselves) may be made manifest among you." You are making a great deal of leaders instead of being taken up with Jesus Christ.

These heretical actions lead Paul to speak about what their coming together should encompass and what it should not. There were as we see divisions in the church. As Christians, they were to come together in one accord, led by the Holy Ghost and not by man's way which was being shown was contrary to the word of God. It was such a problem that Paul had to tell the Corinthian church,

²⁰ When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper.

²¹ For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

²² What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

Having reproved them for their misbehavior at the Table, he lays down clearly the revelation that the risen Christ gave him from Heaven concerning the proper observance of this service. First, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

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What is interesting, is that Paul never knew the Lord here on earth, he was not with the twelve in the upper room when Jesus instituted this ordinance. But Paul, having seen Jesus on the road to Damascus was given instruction by the Lord and was given revelations at other times, also. One of these being, as Paul says here, instruction on the ordinance of the observance of the Lord's Supper.

And this is what He told him:

“That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.” Why does the apostle slip in the expression, “In which He was betrayed,” if not for us to realize that the Lord's Supper was meant to appeal to the hearts of His people and so to remind them that in that very night when our blessed Saviour was to know to the fullest the untrustworthiness, the wickedness, the treachery, the way he would be betrayed by one of His disciples who followed him deceitfully. He gave this feast in order that His people might have before them the continual expression of His loving heart in giving Himself for them.

There is something very tender here. “The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.” Judas evidently was not present when He did this. There is a question as to that, but if you follow carefully through the accounts in the different Gospels, I think you will see that Judas was present at the Passover Feast, but when that was concluded, the Saviour said, “That thou doest, do quickly ... and he went immediately out: and it was night” (John 13:27, 30). Jesus had said before, “The hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table” (Luke 22:21). But Judas went out, and in his absence the Saviour gave this memorial feast to His own. That is very suggestive, for it is only for those who have been redeemed by His precious blood that the Lord's Supper is given. It is not for the unsaved, it is not for those who are hoping to be saved; it is for those who are in the joy of accomplished redemption, who know Christ as Saviour. Jesus told them that were present, including Judas, that to whom he gave the sop, that would be the one to betray him. Sop is bread that has been seeped with, in this case, wine. I find it interesting that Judas, who took the sop, was taking what was to represent the body and the blood mixed together and not as Jesus gave it out to the other eleven. But to them the Lord spoke as Paul told them here in 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25,

²⁴ And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

²⁵ After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

Some tell us that the Lord meant that the bread and the wine are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ when we give thanks to God for it. I won't go into these because they are man made philosophies. For the Lord sat at that table in His complete human body and neither divided His body nor spilt his blood among the disciples. When He took the loaf and said, “This is My body,” His own hands held that loaf. When he held the cup of wine, it was not his blood that he somehow turned into wine as he had before turned water into wine. I believe they are a means of remembering that Jesus

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gave himself up for us and that the bread represents his body and the wine represents his blood. This being said, it is true that as we receive that bread and wine with honest sincere hearts, with minds occupied with Christ, we do receive our blessed Lord in faith in a sense that is not true at other times. It makes Christ very real to us and gives a very definite sense of His presence.

Some may say, "We believe in the real presence of the Saviour in the sacrament, and you believe in His real absence." This is of course, not true. We simply do not believe that the bread and the wine are actually changed into the body and blood of Christ, but we do believe in the real presence our blessed Lord, for He said in Matthew 18:20,

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

And there is no time when Christ's presence is so definitely realized and so distinctly felt as when remembering Him in the observance of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a continual reminder of the vicarious character of His death, and that is one reason why our blessed Lord is so desirous that it should be celebrated frequently.

If people deny the vicarious character of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot understand how with consistency they can participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:26 tells us,

²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Interestingly enough, the word shew is also translated in other places as proclaim or preach! Wherever Christians eat this bread and drink this cup, participating in the Lord's Supper, they are preaching a sermon. By their very actions they are declaring that His death was not merely that of a martyr for righteousness' sake, but that it was death as a sacrifice, that He died for sinners, that He shed His blood for sinners.

Following is a story borrowed from H. A. Ironside describing the effectiveness of the Lord's Supper as a means to preach the Lord's death till he come.

A dear Japanese who attended some of our meetings in Sacramento, California, was troubled about his soul, but it seemed impossible to bring him to Christ because of his love for money. He would say, "If I accept this Jesus as my Saviour, I do not see how I can make money."

So we told him he would have to make the choice of being rich on earth and poor in eternity, or poor on earth and rich in eternity. When I use the pronoun "we," I refer to a Japanese evangelist who was associated with me at the time, and through whom I met this man. A year went by, I returned to the city of Sacramento for meetings, and one night was preaching the gospel on the street corner. In the audience I saw this little Japanese. There was an expression of concern on his face that stirred my heart. At the close of the meeting he stepped up and shook my hand and said, "I so glad to see you again."

I said, "And so am I glad to see you. Have you accepted Christ as your Saviour yet?"

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Tears filled his eyes and he said, "No; I fight against Him. I cannot give up. If I accept Him, I cannot make money. Do you have some meetings here where you are speaking?"

I said, "Yes," and told him where the meetings were being held.

He said, "Do you have a meeting on Sunday where you eat the bread and drink the wine showing how Jesus died?"

I said, "Yes, next Sunday morning."

"I come," he said.

So on the Sunday morning we had gathered together to participate in the Lord's Supper, and as the meeting commenced this Japanese came in and sat close up in the front. I was praying that God might speak to him, and as the meeting went on it was evident that he was greatly perturbed. Finally the people of God partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine, and this heathen Japanese sat and looked on. Just as the elements were replaced on the table, he rose and said, "I like to pray."

I thought, "My! I wish I had told him that he would not be expected to take part in the meeting!"

But he prayed like this: "O God, I all broke up. For one whole year I fight You. I fight You hard. Your Spirit break me all to pieces. O God, today I see Your people eating the bread, drinking the wine, tell how Jesus died for sinners like me. O God, You love me so You give Your Son to die for me. I cannot fight You any more. I give up, I take Him as my Saviour."

It did not spoil our meeting at all to have him take part with such a prayer. We realized that this simple ordinance had preached to him for, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do preach the Lord's death till He come." At the close of the meeting we gathered about him to rejoice with him, and then he turned to me and said, "Jesus say before He go away, when you believe Him, you bury in water, show old life gone, new life begin. I like bury."

"You want to be baptized?" I asked. "I will see you during the week and perhaps we can do it next Sunday."

Referring to the Japanese evangelist, he said, "A year ago he tell me Jesus Christ coming back again, so?"

"Yes," I said; "that is true."

"He coming soon?"

"He may."

"He not come before next Sunday?"

"Well, I couldn't say, He might come before then."

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"Then I no like to wait till next Sunday, I like show I no fight any more, I like be buried today."

I said, "Forgive me for trying to put it off; we will go down to the river this afternoon."

And so in the afternoon he came dressed in his best with the Japanese mayor, as we called the richest man in the Japanese settlement, and forty other Japanese merchants behind him. We preached the Word and he gave his testimony, and then he was buried in the waters of baptism.

The Lord's Supper, if given the place our Saviour intended it to have, will constantly preach to the world, and will say more than any words of ours can say: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do preach the Lord's death till He come."

Finally, 1 Corinthians 11 closes out with a warning against taking the body and blood of Jesus unworthily. We are to examine ourselves and if we feel we are unworthy of taking this communion, we need to straighten that out with the Lord first. Pray to God for forgiveness first in the name of Jesus and He will forgive us of our trespasses. His word says here that if we take this unworthily, we eat and drink damnation on ourselves not understanding the Lord's body. He says this is the cause of many being weak and sick and have died amongst the church at Corinth. It is the same with us.

If you are unsaved, you may have thought of the Lord's Supper as a means whereby you might obtain salvation. Perhaps you have come to the Communion Table and hoped that thereby you might obtain the evidence that your sins were forgiven. My dear friend, the message of the Lord's Supper is this as shown by 1 Corinthians 15:1 - 4,

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

What you need is not an ordinance, for the ordinance cannot save you, but you need the blessed Saviour Himself; you need to trust the One whose death is pictured in the Lord's Supper, the Saviour who gave Himself for you. You need to believe in Jesus and nothing else. Jesus has done the work he was sent to do and now it is up to you to believe on him and preach his death till he come. I leave you with the words of Paul from Romans 10:8 - 9,

⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

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⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

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An Invitation To Take Part In The Lord's Supper

For those who are born again Christians as evidenced solely by their belief on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as the sole source of their salvation, I invite you to take part in the Lord's Supper. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:26 the following,

²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Verses 27 through 30 continues as follows,

²⁷ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

³⁰ For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

We saw how Paul had to correct those of the church at Corinth because of the things they practiced and how they treated and acted towards those who were members of the Body of Christ. Apparently, many were eating of this bread and drinking of this cup unworthily.

It is up to each of us to judge ourselves in this matter. That's right, I said judge. We are to judge ourselves as Paul says here. The idea that we just judge not is unbiblical. We are to judge, but not to judge hypocritically. That's a whole other message. 1 Corinthians 11 closes out with these words,

³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

³² But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

³³ Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

³⁴ And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

If you believe the Gospel as your sole means of salvation, if you have judged yourself worthy because of your position in the Body of Christ, then please join in with this Communion celebration where which we preach the death of Jesus Christ until he returns.

A side note here, Paul is instructing folks here in Corinth that if they are hungry to eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation. He is saying this because there was much division going on with the Corinthian church. There were many who were self professing Christians, but had never been born

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again. They were as Jude called them in Jude 12, "spots in your feasts of charity." When the Church, that is the true Body of Christ, comes together to eat, it is done in the sense that we are about to celebrate here. It is to remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and his soon return. Paul, in order to protect those who were born again, God fearing Christians, from those who Jude calls ungodly as he recants the words of Enoch. Paul, after all, does warn us those in Corinth later in this very letter "be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

When we come together in fellowship, when we eat a meal together as believers in Jesus Christ, we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We take the bread and wine as a symbol of our remembrance of his death, burial and resurrection and show the Lord's death until he comes. It remains bread and wine, but symbolizes his body and blood which was given for us. We are to tarry one for another, that is wait – W A I T – on each other.

If you believe Jesus Christ paid for your sins by means of his death, burial and resurrection, all according to Scripture, and believe that the bread and wine here are a representation of his body and blood which he has already given for us, then we invite you to take part in the Lord's Supper and preach the Lord's death till he come!