

1 Corinthians #18
Pause for Communion
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Up to this point Paul's ministry has been very largely corrective. He has exposed the sins and failures of the church and has sought to answer their problems: some delicate, some difficult, and some very personal. Now it seems as if he stops long enough to take a breath and step aside for just a moment to get away from the difficulties and conflicts in order that they might be refreshed in green pastures and beside still waters, and might have time for reflection.

It is significant that at this particular point in the letter Paul introduces what he has to say about the Lord's Supper. It is as if to say we are to forget for a while the things that might draw us apart and reflect on the one thing that has brought us together: the ministry of Christ. In other words, Paul is saying that the Lord's Supper is a time of fellowship with Jesus, a pause for reflection upon the cross, upon His resurrection, and upon His glorious return.

It was the practice in the early church to meet together for what they called "love feasts" in their homes. This was simply a time of social fellowship, which they followed with celebrating communion.

The Bible seems to suggest the Early Church began this custom almost immediately after the resurrection. For example, Luke 24:13-32 tells us about Jesus' encounter with two men walking on the road to Emmaus. After spending some time talking about the recent events, Jesus was invited into one of their homes for a meal, but at the end of the meal He became Host, and the Bible says He was known to them "in the breaking of bread." **We find a similar thing in Acts 2:46, where we are told that the early disciples continued steadfastly every day in the breaking of bread and in feasting with gladness and singleness of heart. Such was the practice of the early church.**

The trouble was that in Corinth it had gone too far, and the "love feasts" had become something far from what the Early Church had begun. There were those people who had begun to abuse this Fellowship by becoming involved in the excess of eating and drinking. In other words, they were not there for the remembrance of the Lord's death, but simply for a social event of eating and drinking. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 Paul has a word of rebuke concerning their behavior, "When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper...Don't you have homes where you can eat and drink in? Do you despise 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." And in verse 34 he says, "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation." **Although, it is obvious this kind of problem could**

not plague our observance of the Lord's Supper, it still speaks to us concerning our need of real worship during this time.

Therefore, Paul begins his rebuke by taking them back to the very first observance of the Lord's Supper, as seen in 1 Corinthians 11:23, "I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered unto you: That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread." Paul gave this same response in Galatians 1:11-12, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul points out that what he was sharing was not something that he had received secondhand; it came to him straight from the heart of God. I picture a man meeting the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, going into the desert in Arabia, spending three years in Tarsus before Barnabas brought him to Antioch and into missionary work. It was in those years of solitude and preparation he received from the Lord that which he was to preach in public. I am convinced that nothing a preacher has to say will have any effect in the life of another unless it comes direct from the heart of God to the heart of the preacher. Although it is true we can preach another man's message, we cannot have another man's anointing.

In verse 13 Paul says "...the same night in which He was betrayed..." The Greek reads, "...the same night He was *being* betrayed..." **The indication here is that at the same time Jesus was instituting the Lord's Supper the previously arranged negotiations between Judas and the chief priests were actually going on.** And shortly thereafter, Judas, who had left the upper room before the Lord instituted the feast, betrayed him.

In that night when Jesus was betrayed, "He took bread..." He took a loaf, one of the cakes of bread, which had been brought in specifically for the Passover supper, "... and when He had given thanks..." **When Christ was giving thanks for the "cup" and the "bread," in Luke 22:19, He uses the Greek verb "eucharisteo" (u-khar-is-the-o), and in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, He used the verb "eulogeo" (u-lo-geo). One acknowledges the goodness of God and the other signifies praise.** Therefore, when we observe the Lord's Supper, we are simply praising God for His goodness.

The Bible continues, "...He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you." The pure Greek here reads, "which is given for you," just as it reads in Luke 22:19. **The word "broken" was probably inserted to go along with the breaking of the bread.** It is true that the body of Jesus was marred with spikes and a spear, but in reality He *gave* His body - and Scripture says, "not a bone of Him was broken." In His body He conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil, as seen in 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.” And then He was nailed to the cross for the remission of sin, as seen in Romans 5:8-11, “But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

So look with me at what Paul has to tell us about the Lord’s Supper.

First, he says that the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of the past. He says in verse 24, “And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.”

“This do...” simply means, “Give thanks and break bread.” **Any born again believer has a right to participate in the Lord’s Supper.**

“...In remembrance of me” - not “in memory of me.” The Greek word used for "remembrance" literally means, "bringing to mind." **Here it means “bringing to mind” the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world, took a body, and in that body took our place, conquered the world, the flesh and the devil, fulfilled the law every jot and every tittle, and then offered His body on the cross that through His shed blood we might enter boldly into the holy of holies by a new and living way - "the veil, that is, His flesh." We should always remember that we are saved, kept, and our needs supplied only because Jesus took our place, paid the sin debt and purchased eternal life for us!**

Second, he says the Lord’s Supper is the preaching of a sermon. Paul tells us it is to be not only a remembrance, but it is to be an expression of love for the living Christ, as seen verse 26, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He come.” The word translated “proclaim” literally means “preach.” As we have seen in CLIMB 101, when you take the Lord Supper, “You preach the Lord's death.”

The words “...and drink this cup...” have a great meaning for us. Jesus told His disciples, “This cup is the new testament in my blood.” The cup, that is, its contents (the wine) represents the new covenant, the covenant that was ratified and sealed by the blood of Jesus, by the giving of His life in atoning sacrifice. The life of the flesh is in the blood, and when the blood of Jesus was shed, He gave His life.

Now we need to be careful right here, because the cup represents the new covenant, true and sure in virtue of His shed blood; but the cup was not identical with the covenant. In other words, the wine and the bread were not

actually the blood and body of Jesus, but were symbolic of His blood and body. Therefore, the bread and wine are symbols to remind us of the price that was paid for our redemption.

The outstanding and momentous thing about the new covenant is the free bestowment of life eternal upon a hell-deserving sinner through the death of the Son of God's love; and that eternal life is granted by God the Father to the hell-deserving sinner in response to faith in the shed blood of God's only begotten Son. Through the death of Jesus Christ and His shed blood on the cross, God can still be just and yet justify the ungodly-but ONLY on the merit of the shed blood, as seen in Romans 3:21-28, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

The words “This do ye...” are a definite command. **Believers should observe the Lord's Supper, but "as oft as ye drink it" does not specifically give a time limit between observances. It is not specifically stated anywhere in the New Testament that we should observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday, every two Sundays, once a month or once a quarter.** It simply declares, “As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of me.”

Paul has something else to say to us about the Lord's Supper, that it is a place of tremendous hope. Verse 26 says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.” The Greek word translated "show" means proclaim. **Therefore, the very act of receiving the bread and the cup proclaims that Jesus is coming again.** The same Greek word (translated "preach") is used in Acts 4:2; 13:5 and 38; 15:36; 17:3 and 13; I Corinthians 9:14 and Colossians 1: 28. In all of these Scriptures, the meaning is "to proclaim."

I think it is very significant that references to the Lord's Supper are found in only four books in the New Testament, while at the same time, there is some reference made to the Second Coming of Christ in twenty-three out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Of the four books of the New

Testament in which there is no reference to His second coming, three of them have only one chapter, and the other is the Epistle to the Galatians.

Therefore, it is with great emphasis that Word of God sets forth the hope of the Christian church that at any moment, on any given day, the clouds may part and Jesus, our Savior, may come again. So as observe the Lord's Supper, we do not just look back to that great time and event when Jesus shed His blood on the cross, but we look forward to a day when there will be no more sin, or regret, or sorrow, or struggle. There will be no more weakness, no more discouragement, no more ignorance, no more empty places at our family table – we will all be together with Jesus.

It is interesting when you stop to think about it: the Lord Jesus went out from the Last Supper with His disciples to die for them. On the other hand, the disciples went out, one to betray Him, others to be prayer-less and forgetful, but all to desert Him. The sad truth is that many of us have shared in the Lord's Supper together, remembered the price paid for our salvation, rejoiced over the fact that we have been forever redeemed, and live with some anticipation of His soon Return, and yet, like those early disciples, we too go out and deny Him.

Third, he says the Lord's Supper is the searching of our hearts. Look at verses 27-30, “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. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” In these verses Paul gives each of us a strong warning concerning the price and effects of sin.

First, he says that we are to “examine” ourselves. The word used here is the same word from which we get the idea of taking an exam in school, except our textbook is the Bible. We are to study its pages and find out how we measure up to its teachings. So, he says, we are to look within.

Second, he says that we are to look around. He is saying that our disobedience, simply put, is sin, and sin has a high price tag. In fact, James 1:15 says, “Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.”

Third, he says that we are to “eat.” He says, “So let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.” Through the years, I have seen many believers who would not participate when the Lord's Supper was being served because,

based on their understanding of this scripture, they felt they were unworthy to do so.

Let me just me just help you a little bit right here. Based on our own merit, that is, in our own selves, we are not worthy to receive anything from God. In fact, Isaiah 64:6 reminds us that “...we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.” You see, we have only been made clean and worthy through the blood of Jesus Christ. So go ahead and participate, Jesus has made you worthy!

If you have never been saved, why not tonight?