

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1238 – September 16, 2012 – 1 Corinthians 11:17-22
Introducing The Lord's Supper

Before we move on in our 1 Corinthians study I want to make comments on two issues. One is the dire situation of Israel and Iran. The situation is tenuous at best right now. I got a questionable report last night out of Jerusalem that Israel is making military movements the likes of haven't been seen in 20+ years. And whether these reports are genuine or not I would expect war soon. Israel must act or be annihilated. The unfortunate thing is I don't see the US backing Israel in any war with Iran. While many Americans are pro-Israel the Jews don't see Obama as supportive of Israel. Netanyahu, a strong leader, has completely outmaneuvered Obama in their meetings with the intent to get Obama's support. But to no avail. Iran is being left on a long leash and we have completely abandoned Israel. This is a sad, sad time in this nation's history when we turn our back on our only ally in the Middle East and effectively support an Islamic regime. So Israel needs prayer. That's why they're mentioned under the Prayer Request section in the bulletin every week, we love Israel because they gave us the Bible and they gave us the Messiah and God made promises to restore them one day to their kingdom. But before all that can happen we know a time of turmoil lies ahead. So pray for peace but prepare for war.

The second issue is a related one and this goes beyond America turning its back on Israel, regardless of what the Republican and Democratic platform say. This looks at the whole world. With our abandonment of Israel, Israel doesn't have anyone left. Right now the whole world is turning against Israel. Anti-Semitism is in the air again. In Europe the new en vogue fashion among the politically elite is Judenrein, which means "cleansed of Jews." Norway is on the brink of being Judenrein and Sweden and France are hot on their tail. Not 70 years after the Holocaust Anti-Semitism is rearing its ugly head again on the very soil it was supposedly eradicated. Gentile nations cannot not hate

the Jews. Now the cause of it in Europe is the immigration of Muslims. This is a major problem because the Muslim strategy is to take over the world, global conquest, and they do it by population growth. All they have to do among nations that are in a population dearth is reproduce, reproduce, reproduce and reproduce they are, and as they are they are taking over these nations and breeding Anti-Semitism. Now America is not far behind. We are having a population dearth and Muslims are immigrating en masse to the US. And here we have in the public school system our children being indoctrinated with the fantastical idea that Islam is a peaceful religion. Now are we going to spit on the graves of nearly 3,000 lost on 9/11 and the 7,000 soldiers who died in Iraq and Afghanistan? What is this country coming to when we are attacked by Muslims and we apologize to them and award medals to soldiers who don't shoot enemy combatants. More and more I feel estranged from my own countrymen. I have to tell you, I don't know who I am living among any more. Are they friend or foe I really don't know. But I do know that we are living in a very precarious situation right now. And I'm not a date setter or a doomsday person but I'd be remiss if I didn't say something, especially since we are a dispensational Bible church. So my advice to you is to pray for the peace of Israel and to make your voice heard in this election, and to pray for our country to come back to the Scriptures because that's the only place you're going to get any real change for the better, and the only place to find real hope.

Alright, we're studying 1 Corinthians. The book can be divided into two portions; we're in the second portion. The first portion is chapters 1-6, Reported Problems, the second section is chapters 7-16, Raised Questions. The Reported Problems came from some people out of Chloe's house. Chloe lived in or around Ephesus and she was a wealthy woman who sent some of her people annually or semi-annually on business trips to Corinth. While they were there they visited the local church at Corinth which met in the home of a wealthy aristocrat named Gaius. And when they visited they observed certain problems and reported these back to Paul. In chapters 1-6 Paul is addressing these problems. But there was also a letter sent to Paul from the Corinthians where they Raised Questions. And the three men who carried this letter were Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. And in chapters 7-16 Paul is responding to the questions raised in the letter.

I remind you of this because what we find today in 1 Cor 11:17-34 is a section that is partly a reported problem and partly a raised question. It relates to both sections. It had apparently been reported to Paul because 1 Cor 11:18 says so; Paul says he heard divisions existed among them and in part he believed it. So he had received some report. However, at the same time this relates to the raised questions since the section is all about Christian freedom and edification within the body. The question these visitors from Chloe's house were concerned about was over the Lord's Supper and how that was being practiced, whether what they were doing was edifying. Edifying meaning it built others up, it strengthened them in the faith. Was their practice of the Lord's Supper doing that?

So the new topic is the Lord's Supper, sometimes called the breaking of bread or communion or the Eucharist. I only disagree with the term Eucharist, not because it's a bad word, the word is the Greek word *eucharisteo* and means simply "to give thanks." So it's not the Greek word I don't like, it's what the word has picked up over time, namely, the idea that grace is somehow communicated to the participant in this ritual. There is no grace communicated to anyone when they partake of the elements in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is memorial in character, it is a time of remembrance of what Christ has done for us. Now we'll deal with the differences in views as we get into verse 23 and following but today I just introduced the four terms used to describe this passage; the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, communion and the Eucharist, all have valid Scriptural support but only the first three are untainted by the idea that grace is communicated to the participant in the elements, an idea I would dismiss as Greek in origin and completely unrelated to Scripture.

Now there's another issue here I want to address that was part of the 1st century practice of the Lord's Supper that we no longer practice and that's the Love Feast or what they called the Agape. There was a meal in addition to the partaking of the elements and these were closely knit together in the 1st century, they were inseparable. If you took the Lord's Supper you ate a meal as well. So let me explain the Love Feast because it's assumed in the passage. If you turn to Jude 12 you can see indeed that the NT recognizes the Love Feast. I take it the situation addressed in Jude is certain wolves have crept into the congregation seeking to destroy it with false doctrine, seeking to undermine Scriptural authority and replace it with their own. Jude says of

them in verse 12, “These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.” Now I take it that these were unbelievers that had crept in. Paul calls them hidden reefs which are hazards to ships. These unbelievers were hazards to the whole congregation in the love feasts since they carried out the feast in a divisive manner, that’s going to be the major problem in the love feasts and that is the division they caused which was exactly the opposite of the unity the love feast was supposed to demonstrate. So these hidden reefs threatened the whole church, put the entire church at risk for crashing against the rocks and sinking. And so I show you this to show that the love feasts were indeed practiced in the 1st century church and they were important for the sake of fellowship and were supposed to enforce unity among one another. The church is a community and needs to demonstrate fellowship and unity around breaking of bread with one another, encouraging one another in the truths of Scripture and so forth.

Now why did the early church have love feasts? Why not just the Lord’s Supper? Well in the 1st century these love feasts were already a common part of Jewish life and practice. On the weekly Sabbath and annual feast, most familiar of which was the Passover, the Jews would gather in small groups with their friends just like Jesus and His disciples did on the night of the Last Supper so it’s no surprise these came into Christianity since the first Christians were Jews. Remember, the Church began in Acts 2 and in Acts 2 the whole church was Jewish, so they came in and they brought along many of their traditions, one of which was this fellowship meal later called the Agape feast.

When you went to one of these it was a joyous time. When you arrived there would be hors d’oeuvres and then you and your friends would move to the table proper for the meal. The host would pronounce a blessing, a thanksgiving to God, break the bread and distribute it to all the participants. And while you ate the meal you’d discuss theology and recline at the table, it was a relaxing time. When nightfall occurred they would light lamps and a benediction would be recited acknowledging God as the Creator of light. When the meal was over they would wash their hands and pronounce a final

benediction over “the cup of blessing” praising God for His provision and praying for God’s purposes to be fulfilled in the coming kingdom. The meal would conclude with the singing of a Psalm.

It seems that the Love Feast was a continuation of this kind of table fellowship enjoyed among the Jews, most notably in the NT, by Jesus and His disciples. And some even trace it directly to the last meal Jesus had with His disciples on the night of Passover when He was betrayed. So it’s carried over from Jewish practices, at least elements of it were and developed into the Love Feast where the early Christians enjoyed a meal in the evening and at the conclusion of the meal took communion. Now this was practiced daily in the early days of the church, if you turn to Acts 2:46, the disciple’s daily broke bread and fellowshiped with one another. ⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,” see the breaking of bread there? And the taking of meals together? The breaking of bread is the Lord’s Supper and the taking of meals together is the Love Feast, they went hand in hand. And we’re not told why they did this daily but I would suggest that this was due to their any-moment expectation of the kingdom. In the early period of the Book of Acts Peter is re-offering the kingdom to the nation Israel and so you had a lot of Jewish believers selling their possessions and preparing for the kingdom. There was no need to hold on to all their possessions since the kingdom was right around the corner and in the kingdom Christ would distribute land grants, so they shared all things in common, voluntarily of course. This wasn’t some kind of socialist scheme, it was a voluntary scheme and it was done for the sake of expediency in preparation for the kingdom. But over time, as it became apparent that the kingdom’s arrival might be delayed, the supper was held less frequently. As the church grew less and less Jewish and more and more Gentile the meal was separated completely from the taking of communion and by the 7th century so much controversy had erupted in the church over it that the meal was completely abandoned. So only rarely today do you hear of something like a love feast being held at a church and if you do they are usually held in the evening and communion is taking during the feast.

Now probably the closest parallel you would recognize today as a love feast would be a potluck. But understand, in the 1st century the potluck was intimately tied to the communion. Everyone would bring food, there would be

wine, it was a joyous time to discuss theology, fellowship with one another, sing Psalms, it was very theocentric, it wasn't about who won the Rangers game, it was a time to fellowship around the one thing we all hold in common, a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the unity we share. So get down the major themes; unity, fellowship, partaking in Christ's sacrifice and until the kingdom comes. The Lord's Supper inside this love feast emphasizes unity, in which we are all one, which is why originally there was one bread that we all partake of, one loaf of unleavened bread, and one cup, one cup of wine that we all drank of, that oneness emphasized unity. Another theme of the Lord's Supper is fellowship, we are fellowshiping with one another through Christ's death, the one thing we all share in, we are all partakers of Christ's death and resurrection through faith. A third theme of the Lord's Supper is remembrance, we are remembering Christ's death, what He did for us as the Lamb without sin was slain for the sin of the world. It is important to go back and remember that frequently, it gives you pause to re-evaluate your life and why you are here and what you are here for. And finally, a fourth theme of the Lord's Supper is until the kingdom comes, once the kingdom comes there is no need to practice this memorial supper for we will be with Christ.

Now with that background let's look at the verse by verse starting in verse 17. **But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you**, he had praised them in the prior instruction of verse 2 regarding how they remembered him in their prayers and how they held firmly to the traditions just as he had delivered them. But, verse 17, **in giving this instruction** he is now about to give them, he does **not praise** them, mainly because the way they were carrying it out violated those four themes I mentioned.

Now the word for **instruction**, *paraggelo*, refers to something that must be done, some command, so Paul's instructions in this section must be followed or else there are going to be dire consequences and he won't tell us the consequences until later, some were sick and others slept, bad consequences. Therefore Paul says **because you come together not for the better but for the worse**. It would have been far better if they did not come together at all than to come together the way they were coming together. It would have been better if they just stayed home. Your coming together is for the worse not the better.

Verse 18, **For, in the first place** is Paul's way of starting a series. He's not going to continue the series; in verse 34 he's going to say, as for the other points in the series, those I'll arrange when I come. So he only revealed the first matter in the letter, the others we're unaware of, but there were other matters Paul needed to put in order. So understand this is not a lone issue, there were several things out of order at Corinth and he's just addressing the first one. Verse 18, **in the first place, when you come together as a church, en ekklesia**, "in the assembly," I'd translate that "in the assembly," so this is the formal meeting, in contrast to the instruction up to this point which has been outside the formal meeting time, issues concerning meat sacrificed in pagan temples and head coverings. This instruction relates to their gathering in the assembly. So this is the formal assembly time and Paul says, **I hear that divisions exist among you**; Paul heard this, this was reported to Paul by people present in the assembly, there were **divisions**, the Greek word *schisma* from which we get schism. The idea is well-translated **divisions** and the formal idea of this word is "a division because of conflicting aims or objectives." In other words there were various groups among the Corinthian Church pursuing different interests and these conflicting interests were causing division. Now this was observed by the people out of Chloe's house when they visited the church at Gaius' house. And they knew the divisions were serious so they reported them to Paul. And if you turn back to 1 Cor 1:10, I'm taking you way back to the beginning of this letter, but from the very beginning Paul exhorted them regarding these divisions. Verse 10, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." ¹³Has Christ been divided?" Note the four divisions in the church, they were all split up and Paul didn't want all that splitting up, he wanted people together, he wanted unity. The Church is the unified body of Christ, we are all one in Christ. Christ isn't apportioned, a little over to this group, a little to that group, we all share Christ, we are united in Christ.

So whatever they were doing at the love feast was causing division in the body of Christ. Now what's interesting is that in the next chapter, 1 Cor 12:25, the spiritual gifts are going to come into place and Paul uses the same

word to say that the spiritual gifts were given in order that there may be no division in the body. Spiritual gifts are given in order to reinforce unity, to forge a strong bond of unity. And the Lord's Supper was designed to do that too, yet they are turning it into an opportunity for the flesh, an opportunity for division.

So let's go back to 1 Cor 11:18 and look at Paul's response. **I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.** Now Paul says, **in part I believe it.** I don't think he's saying I partially believe it, I think he's saying "in part of the church I believe it," there was an element in the church in which Paul believed this was occurring. And verse 19 explains why he believes this to be the case. **For there must also be factions among you.** Don't you find it interesting that Paul says there must be factions. The Greek word translated **must** is *dei* and means "of necessity," it's very strong in the original, Paul is saying there **must be** these **factions**. Now isn't that strange, especially since a faction is a group that holds distinctive tenets, we'd say a school of thought, there were different schools of thought in the church at Corinth? Paul says this is necessary and I find that very interesting because the same Greek word is a fruit of the flesh in Gal 5:20, it's put alongside "outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, envying, drunkenness, etc..." and yet Paul says they must be. Paul knew something here I don't think most Christians know, and that is that believers still have a flesh and therefore there are conflicting interests in the church, they must occur. And yet I don't think most Christians want that or think that's normal. I think most Christians want everything to operate on autopilot and there to be no drama. Well, there is drama and that's normal, the reason that's normal is because Christians still walk by the flesh, Christians don't always walk by the Spirit. Christians still walk by the flesh and so as long as there are Christians with a flesh there will be factions. So don't be too optimistic. Some Christians have gotten so tired of the factions that they quit the whole thing, don't want to have anything to do with a local church because it's exhausting. When they arrive it seems everything goes to hell in a hand basket. Yeah, well that's normal, so get used to it buddy. Paul did.

Now why were these necessary? **So that those who are approved may become evident among you.** In other words, the cream always rises to the

top. Those **who are approved** are the *dokimos*, and trials are designed to identify the *dokimos*, the approved ones. So what this implies is that the factions were trials that God sent the church in order to bring forth those who are approved into leadership positions. So just as God sends individuals trials so as to approve of them at the judgment seat of Christ so God sends local churches trials so as to approve of the men in the congregation that are qualified for the leadership offices of elder and deacon. And factions are given by God for the very purpose that those who qualify for these two offices are made evident to everyone else. So this is one means God uses to help us identify the men God wants to put in charge of His local church. And you will know these men because they are the men who when factions arise, disputes over doctrine, disputes between people, disputes over anything causing division, seek to solve the dispute by using sound doctrinal principles, by drawing out the truth of Scripture and solving problems according to Scripture. Lots of people can solve problems, that's not the kind of man you're looking for. You're looking for the man who solves the problem according to Scripture, able to cite principle and passage. So they've obviously got to be men of the Scripture, very zealous for the word and not only breadth of knowledge but depth of knowledge. So when factions arise these opportunities arise and these men rise to the occasion, they find the relevant biblical passages and principles and they apply them to solve the problem and thus become approved and evident to all.

Now this is the very thing that has given rise to denominationalism, all the various denominations after the time of the Protestant Reformation. You had three major schools, the Reformed, Lutheran and Anabaptist, and out of those came all the denominations you know of today, the Presbyterians, the Episcopal, the Baptist, they all arose out of those three because God sent factions, disputes over things early on like water baptism and the Lord's Supper and so you had one party arguing this way and another party arguing another way and guess what happened? You had a church split. Now the problem was not the faction, God sent the faction so men would fight it out according to Scripture and solidify what Scripture taught. But the problem was that once the Scriptural teaching was identified and those men approved, the ones who were approved were not recognized by everyone. People played favorites on some other basis than Scripture and sided with the disapproved. And that has always been the problem, that's why there are so many denominations, the factions arose, those who solved the problem

Scripturally were broken off from, some went with them but many went with the disapproved, and it just gets back to Scripture, or it should. You should always follow the Scriptural group no matter your personal bias; Scripture is always the way to go. So you show yourself approved unto God when these things happen, go to the Scriptures, be a Berean, accurately handle the word of God, and side with the group that is standing on the word of God, that is the group God has approved.

So now Paul is going to do this, Paul is going to demonstrate how to solve an issue and which faction to be a part of. Notice verse 20, **Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.** The factions themselves proved it. The Lord's Supper was a time to remember, to express unity, to fellowship and to love as we have all partaken of Christ's sacrifice. Yet verse 21, **in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.** They were divided and the divisions were occurring along socioeconomic lines; the rich were bringing their own dinner and eating it all themselves not sharing it with anyone else. The result of that was the poor among them went hungry. Others had become drunk on the wine. And what kind of love feast is it when the rich don't share with the poor and you have divisions along these lines? That's a very interesting way of expressing love. And what Paul is trying to do is say, look, socioeconomics is not important and if you are dividing over that issue you have made socioeconomics the chief thing when the chief thing is our unity in Christ, whether rich or poor, slave or free, Jew or Gentile, we are all one in Christ Jesus. So why, if we all share in the one Christ Jesus, were there divisions occurring among them? That the approved among them might be made evident to all. Who was going to solve the problem? Who was going to rise to leadership at Corinth? Who had been studying the Scriptures? Well, that's the question and this was the situation, the rich people were hoarding what they brought, it was the better food, but this left the poor hungry and others were getting drunk. Socioeconomic distinctions have always been hard for the church to overcome. People naturally divide along these lines and we don't see it as much in American churches just because of the presence of a middle class. But understand most cultures have not had a middle class, it's been upper and lower class and it's been a sharp divide.

So Paul says, verse 22, **What? Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?** You know, you could eat and drink before you came if you were

so hungry. It would have been better for you just to eat there and then come than to come and eat your own stuff and not share. Don't you have houses to do that in? Why do you have to come to church to do that and humiliate people? What kind of testimony is that? A sorry one. **Or do you despise the church of God**, do you think little of it, is it of small importance to you? I think we have a problem with that today, with all the organizations we're a part of we tend to think the church of God is just what? Another organization. And yet it's not only another organization. The Church of Jesus Christ is the only organization Christ ever built. So why be so involved in every other organization and neglect the only one Christ ever built? Jesus Christ isn't interested in all your other organizations; Jesus Christ is interested in His church, His body. And yet everyone orders their lives around every other organization. So you who are doing this, what does that communicate about the place of the church in your thinking? You think very little of it, you think it's not that important, you think very shallowly of it, the only thing Christ ever built, the thing that is Christ's conduit for reaching the world with the gospel. **Do you** Paul asks, **despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? Shame** is the word humiliate, do you humiliate those who have nothing, they had the poor people and they couldn't bring much food to the feast and what they did bring wasn't very good and then they had the rich and they had brought plenty to eat and the best money could buy and they weren't sharing any of it, they were pigging out and thereby humiliating the poor people who were going hungry.

What shall I say to you? says Paul. He's exasperated with them, what do expect me to say to you? What am I supposed to say? You leave me no choice. **Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.** How could he? They didn't leave him anything to praise them for? And Paul was one for praise. If he could find anything to praise them for he'd praise them, as he did in verse 2. But there simply was nothing to praise them for in the manner in which they were keeping the Lord's Supper. They were causing division when the supper was to promote unity; they were disengaging from fellowship when the supper was to engage fellowship. Shall I praise you? I will not praise you. Now these are strong words and I think we have to come to grips with the four uses of the word of God described and read every Sunday in 2 Tim 3:16-17, teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness; two positive, two negative, people like the positive, teaching and training in righteousness but there's also the negative, reproof and correction and that's what Paul is doing

here. Paul was an authority figure. Paul was an apostle and Paul would straighten you out if you got out of line. And I will too.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2012