

# Life Together

*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?  
If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.  
For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.  
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17. ESV)*

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same  
image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.  
(2 Corinthians 3:18. ESV)*

## **The Lord's Supper**

**April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**1 Corinthians 11:17-26**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11:17. That's on page 958 in your pew Bible. We are going to spend two Sundays, as I mentioned, addressing this very important topic. This week we are going to take a textual approach. We are going to walk very slowly through the words of institution that Paul provides as a correction to the Corinthian abuses. Then next week we'll do more of a topical message that addresses some of the implications that the Apostle Paul mentions in verses 27-34, we'll look at some of the applications that we've made here at FBC, Orillia and then we'll look at some of the common questions that arise in our hearts as we approach the Lord's Table. This week we begin with the text. Hear now from God's Holy, inspired and inerrant Word:

<sup>17</sup> But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, <sup>19</sup> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:17-34 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Our focus is on Paul's positive instruction on the Lord's Supper in verses 23-26 but obviously to understand that we need to know what problems Paul had diagnosed. Let's talk quickly then about the errors and abuses that existed among the Corinthians with respect to the practice of communion.

### **Problems And Abuses:**

Paul's assessment of the situation in Corinth was pretty grim. He talks about division and disorder and he is concerned about the consequent distortion of the Gospel.

Paul mentions divisions first of all in verse 18. Now, we have to remember that Paul was establishing churches in cultures that had no previous frame of reference for the message and the values of the Gospel. There is no such thing as a neutral culture and we all begin to address the Gospel as people with default values and beliefs. So here. These people were Romans and they had a default approach to social social meals and gatherings. They had been to banquets before – even religious banquets. They were used to the social customs associated with those meetings. They expected that the seating would be arranged on the basis of status, wealth and intimacy with the host. So, if you were a wealthy person or a close associate of the host then you ate in the main dining room of the home. If you were a little further removed, and a little further down the social ladder, then you ate in an adjoining chamber or out in the hall where a secondary table had been set up. If you were a servant then a table might be set up outside in the courtyard so that you could also have a share in the master's hospitality. Of course, the quality of the food in the courtyard would not compare with the food being offered to the wealthier guests, but such was to be expected. And of course if you were a servant, you would only get to eat after you had served everybody else. That's just how it was done and apparently that's exactly how it was being done in the church.

Remember that the earliest churches met in the homes of the wealthiest members and so it seems that the prosperous and prominent members of the church were eating in the dining room alongside the host. The middle class folks were eating at a secondary table in an adjoining room

or hallway. The poor folks, the slaves and servants, were eating outside and they were eating very little and they were eating after they had served the others. It was a disgusting distortion of everything the Gospel promises. And Paul says if that is how you are celebrating communion I would rather you just stayed home. He goes so far as to say in verses 18-20:

<sup>18</sup> For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, <sup>19</sup> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. (1 Corinthians 11:18-20 ESV)

Sarcasm doesn't translate well across languages but Paul is saying here that these divisions that you think mark you off as special and blessed actually mark you off as outside the body of Christ. Real Christians don't do that, he says. Real Christians don't shame the poor. You think you look special sitting in there with the host while the poor sit outside and eat your crumbs. Well, you don't look special, Paul says, you look stupid. You look like you don't have a clue what this is all about. Paul is being harsh and sarcastic. He is saying that what they are doing is not Christian in any recognizable way.

And you should have known better, because I already taught you about this. That is the force of the "for" with which Paul introduces the second section. In the second section of the text that is the focus of our message today, Paul begins to provide a review of the instruction they had already received about the institution of the Lord's Supper.

### **Reviewing The Words Of Institution:**

I want you to see 6 statements in particular. Paul wants them to notice first of all that the first Lord's Supper took place:

#### **i. On the night when Jesus was betrayed...**

There are likely two things that Paul wants us to hear in that phrase. First of all he means for us to connect the Lord's death to the prophecies of the suffering servant in The Book Of Isaiah. The Greek word Paul uses here translated as "betrayed", also means "delivered over" or "given up" and is used twice in Isaiah 53.

All we as sheep have gone astray; every one has gone astray in his way; and **the Lord gave him up** for our sins. (Isaiah 53:6 LXX-B)

Therefore he shall inherit many, and he shall divide the spoils of the mighty; because his soul was delivered to death; and he was numbered among the transgressors; and he bore the sins of many, and **was delivered** because of their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:12 LXX-B)

Paul is saying that the death of Jesus was the fulfilment of those prophecies. Jesus was the Suffering Servant who gave his life as a ransom for many.

Secondly Paul is also issuing a warning to the Corinthian believers. Commentators note that:

The reference to the betrayal of the Lord (*on the night he was betrayed*) reminds us that from its very institution the meal has always been in danger of being eaten by those who fail to live out its meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Judas ate the Last Supper and then he went out and betrayed the Lord. Be careful that you do not do the same, Paul says.

## **ii. When he had given thanks...**

This is where we get the word “eucharist” from. That’s the Greek word for “to give thanks”. Communion is a form of grateful response to the grace of God in Christ. Worship RESPONDS to the Gospel in an attitude of gratitude. When you participate in the Lord’s Supper there is an appropriate attitude and mood. You should be contemplative and you should be thankful.

## **iii. He took bread and said, “This is my body which is (broken) for you...”**

We’re doing this slightly out of order here because it actually appears that Jesus gave thanks with the bread in his hands, but it is useful to consider all of what is said about the bread at one time. Let’s talk first about the bread itself. Scholars generally agree that the bread is intended to symbolize at least two things. First of all it means to recall the “bread of affliction” from Deuteronomy 16:3:

Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in

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<sup>1</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 549.

haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 16:3 ESV)

This is part of the series of instructions that Moses gave to the Israelites concerning the celebration of Passover. The Lord’s Supper happens in the context of that Old Testament feast – we’ll talk more about that next week, but for now notice that the bread associated with Passover is referred to as “the bread of affliction”. It is the bread of suffering. Therefore we can be sure that the bread of communion is intended to remind us of the Lord’s suffering on our behalf. He bore our sins **IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS**, upon **HIM WAS THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE** and by **HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED**. When you hold the bread in your hand you are supposed to recall the sufferings of the Lord – **FOR YOU**.

Secondly, the bread is intended to remind us of the manna in the desert. James Hamilton Jr. says that:

“Christ is the new Passover lamb whose blood covers them and removes God’s wrath; the waters of baptism match the waters of the Red Sea; they have entered into a new covenant; God has tabernacle in them by His Spirit, making them his temple; and they journey through the wilderness toward the kingdom of God, **partaking of the Lord’s Supper as Israel partook of the manna and celebrated the feasts of God’s deliverance.**”<sup>2</sup>

There is a sense in which communion recalls a once for all action that is unrepeatable.

Communion is not a sacrifice, it does not repeat the event of the cross. It remembers work that is finished and yet it also refreshes those once for all graces as applied to the believer who partakes in faith. This exact balance is preserved in our Statement of Faith at this church. Reaching all the way back to The Old Baptist Confession our Statement reads as follows:

The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by His church till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, **to confirm the faith and other graces** of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and **renewal of their communion with Him**, and of their church fellowship. It is not to be partaken of unworthily nor without due preparation.

As the manna gave the people of God strength in the desert and so are we strengthened in our spiritual journey through the confirmation of our graces and the renewal of our communion.

We also need to deal quickly with the rather controversial phrase “this is my body”. As many of

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<sup>2</sup> James Hamilton Jr., “The Lord’s Supper In Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation Of The Gospel.” In *The Lord’s Supper: Remembering And Proclaiming Until He Comes*, edited by Thomas Schreiner & Matthew Crawford, 91. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.

you will know it was largely due to that little phrase that the various groups of Protestants were unable to join together into a single church communion. They could not agree on what those words actually mean. Martin Luther famously wrote in chalk upon his table while debating with other Reformers: “Hoc est corpus meum” – THIS IS MY BODY! Luther insisted on an essentially literal interpretation of those words. While he did not believe that the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation should be required of all people because it was not explicitly taught in the Bible, he nevertheless believed something very similar and he could not agree with the Zwinglians at the other end or the Calvinists in the middle and that is the most immediate reason that no one single Protestant denomination ever came into existence. This is not the place to defend our understanding of this issue, I will just remind you of the Passover setting in which the head of the household was to speak words of interpretation over each of the elements in order to provide their symbolic significance. Therefore, along with most Reformed and Baptist interpreters we would hold that:

The bread should be understood to represent Christ’s body just as the different elements of the Passover Seder represented and reminded them of different aspects of Israel’s experience of redemption at the time of the exodus.<sup>3</sup>

Next we should notice the words in verse 24b:

#### **iv. Do this in remembrance of me...**

Notice as well that these same words appear in verse 25 after the cup meaning that both the bread and the cup are intended to facilitate meditative recollection. We do this – BREAD AND CUP – in remembrance of Christ. Now we should hear that alongside of something that the Apostle said in Acts 20 to the gathered elders of Ephesus. Believing this to be their last meeting together on earth Paul defended his ministry among them saying:

<sup>26</sup>Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,<sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:26–27 ESV)

If it was in the Bible, I preached on it, Paul says. He preached the whole – but here in 1 Corinthians 11 – he reminds them to return again and again to the heart. Whole and heart – that is the balance of Christian worship. Preach the WHOLE but return often to the HEART. The

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<sup>3</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 550.

heart functions as the interpretive master of the whole. Its brilliant actually. It is hard to get too far astray in your Biblical theology if you have to come back here every week or every month to the foot of the cross. The cross is meant to anchor all subsequent Christian conversation. Think about this for a second in very practical terms. Suppose I wanted to preach to you on the Prosperity Gospel. I wanted to pull some verses out of context and suggest to you that Christians are never sick, Christians are the head and not the tail, Christians can NAME AND CLAIM their blessings. God wants to give you that promotion, you just have to BELIEVE so as to RECEIVE. That's a hard sermon to transition from into a remembrance of the Lord's Supper. Because HERE IS CHRIST –in weakness, naked, hated, robbed, betrayed and alone, DYING ON THE CROSS as a servant FOR YOU. Where is his prosperity? He didn't GET anything, but he GAVE it all. You see, those things don't go together. The Prosperity Gospel and the Cross don't meet. You can't tell people that God only wants them to be happy and then SHOW people God's SON DYING on the cross. The heart informs and reforms the whole.

Here's the thing; I'll make it simple for you: if you can't transition from your sermon into the celebration of the Lord's Supper then your sermon was heresy. God keeps us from straying by chaining us to the cross. Come back here OFTEN and REMEMBER. Remember that God did for us what we could never do for ourselves – so don't even think about turning Christianity into a works based religious system. Remember that God paid for what we did do in the body of his Son upon the cross – so don't think for a second that your sin doesn't matter. God hates sin and God loves you and you can't forget those grounding truths when you are coming back here week after week, month after month to remember.

Fifthly, I want you to notice verse 25 where Paul says:

v. **In the same manner he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the New Covenant in my blood...**

By saying that this cup is the New Covenant in my blood Jesus was very clearly positioning the Lord's Supper as a covenant ritual. The Old Covenant was sealed with blood too – do you remember that?

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exodus 24:8 ESV)

That blood was the blood of the Old Covenant. Jesus says, this cup is the blood of the New. The New Covenant was prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31:

<sup>31</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers.” (Jeremiah 31:31–32 ESV)

Jeremiah said that a New Covenant was coming which is going to be NOT LIKE the Old Covenant which is very good news because the point of the Old Testament is that the people of God couldn't KEEP the Old Covenant. They knew the good that they should do to walk with God but they could not DO IT. They broke the Old Covenant again and again and again and so the prophet says that God will have mercy on us and make a New Covenant. A covenant that contains some very helpful promises for broken people.

<sup>33</sup> I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33–34 ESV)

That is the covenant that we need! God promises to change our hearts so that we WANT to do his will. He promises to be personally present with us and to be our teacher and to put his Spirit in us to lead us and to guide us and most of all, he promises to forgive us. Jesus – on the night he was betrayed; on the night he would go to his death upon the cross took a cup and said THIS IS THAT. This cup IS the NEW COVENANT in my blood. This is what you've been waiting for.

Now, we need to skip back one chapter in 1 Corinthians where Paul said some things we need to hear about the bread and the cup and how we come to share in the benefits that it provides. He says in chapter 10:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV)

Paul says that when we partake we participate. When we eat the bread and drink the cup in faith we SHARE IN the body and blood of Christ, that is, whatever his suffering earned – we share. Whatever his blood paid for is credited to our account. When you take the cup into your hand, look at it. Give thanks for it. Drink it in faith and as you do, rejoice that you are counted joint



heirs with Jesus and SONS OF THE LIVING GOD. All that is Christ's by virtue of his perfect life and substitutionary death – now BELONGS TO YOU. The cup of blessing that we bless – is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? Thanks be to God – IT IS!

Now, for the sake of time we will skip over the words: “For as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup” and we will deal with the issue of how often we should celebrate the Lord's Supper next week because that is a very commonly asked question. Finally though for this message let us notice what Paul says in verse 26b. However often you partake – when you partake:

**vi. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes...**

First of all then let's notice that communion is part of our proclamation – it is not some sort of secret hidden ritual to be ashamed of. I remember in the second church I ever worked at, which was a seeker style of church, we intentional did not celebrate communion during the Sunday morning service. That service we were told again and again, was not for us, it was for visitors. Visitors we were told would not understand communion and it would rude to conduct a ritual in front of them that they were not really invited to participate in. And so we had communion, a couple of times a year in the evening and almost nobody showed up. Essentially, we were a non-communicating church. That is a big part of what I came to dislike about that movement. I am not ashamed of the Lord's Supper and I believe that this is one of the most effective things we do to communicate the heart and substance of the Gospel. Yes, I would imagine that it might be confusing to a newcomer. I think it is possible that someone might be a bit offended to be told that they should not participate in the next part of the service but I don't think that is an insurmountable problem. After the service, you just ask the new person next to you if they understood what just happened. You play Philip to their Ethiopian eunuch and you offer to explain and you will probably find yourself explaining the Gospel. Listen, I have to come to believe that explaining the sacraments is one of the easiest ways of doing evangelism. Weird can be helpful! I have led people to Christ – by God's grace - just by explaining baptism to them. I had a person come in one time and they said they wanted to get baptized because they liked our church and their kids enjoyed the kids ministry. It seemed clear to me that they did not actually understand baptism very well and so I just asked if I could explain it. They said yes, they listened and then afterwards they said: “Well that sounds great, I'd like to do that.” So we prayed

to confess Christ as Lord and Savior right then and there. Explaining these SIGNS is the easiest form of evangelism going. Let's not hide them LETS HIGHLIGHT THEM and explain them and invite people to respond. The Lord's Supper is a picture of Christ on the cross. It is the very heart and substance of our message to the world.

And this is the message we have been given to proclaim, Paul says, until JESUS COMES. That's worth thinking about. This meal – as wonderful as it is – is not the ULTIMATE MEAL that we are anticipating. Its an appetizer. Its a foretaste. The Great Banquet is yet to come. The prophets spoke of that day:

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined... <sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. <sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:6–9 ESV)

This is not yet that day. But Jesus said that that day was coming and he gave us this Supper to remind us, to encourage us, TO TIDE US OVER and to assure us that he will come again. He will come and we will eat and be satisfied forever. We will look at the Lamb who was slain and we will say: Behold – this is our God, we have waited for him and he has saved us. This is the Lord, let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Even so, come Lord Jesus, let's pray together.