

In Remembrance of Him

Call to Worship: Psalm 98

Hymn Insert- *My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness*

1st Scripture: Matthew 26:17-30

Hymn Insert- *Amazing Love*

2nd Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

Hymn #216- *Crown Him With Many Crowns*

Introduction

Why do we take the Lord's Supper? What is the purpose and meaning of it? In what sense does it serve to edify and build up the body, such that most would consider it a significant means of grace, even as we would the preaching of the Word, prayer, baptism and mutual Christian fellowship? Are the elements of the bread and the cup, miraculously, changed into the literal body and blood of Christ, such that, each time we partake of the Supper, Christ is actually re-sacrificed and offered up to God, again and again, as a means of atoning for new sins, making His original sacrifice on the cross insufficient, as the Roman Catholic Church would proclaim in their Mass? Or is it simply and only a symbolic practice, calling us to reflect upon Christ's finished work on the cross at Calvary?

In the text that we have before us this morning, in a context where the Apostle Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for their abuse and misuse of the Lord's Supper, I believe that we can obtain the answers to these kinds of questions. And it is my hope, that as we look at this text, we will be better prepared to take of His Supper this morning, with a renewed sense of joy, reverence and sobriety.

I. A Context of Neglect, Abuse and Division

In our immediate context, then, we find Paul ultimately having to explain the significance of the Lord's Supper, because the Corinthians, in their abuse and misuse of it for reasons of selfish indulgence, had completely lost sight of the sanctify of the ordinance. Notice, how Paul rebukes them for indulging themselves at the Supper, which led them to neglect others, who now could not partake, creating further schism and division in the church. [Read vs. 17-22].

And so, here we find that, in their selfish use of the Lord's Supper, the Corinthians were taking their fill of the bread and the wine, at the neglect of others, which created division in the

body. Some were even getting drunk (from the wine that they used). And therefore, even more so, as we will see in a few moments, they defiled the whole sanctity and purpose of the Supper (which was to commemorate Christ and His atonement), and sinned against the sacrifice of Christ, by treating this ordinance as an ordinary means of gratifying their fleshly desires.

For a moment, it is also worthy to note that when Paul states in verse 20, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the *Lord’s* Supper...,” he is emphasizing the fact that this Supper is supposed to be that which belongs and pertains *to the Lord!* By their gross, indulgent, behavior, the Corinthians had turned the *Lord’s* Supper into the *Corinthian’s* Supper. Their selfish, divisive behavior denied the fact that they were to be guests at the *Lord’s* table, who is the true host of the Lord’s Supper.

II. In Remembrance of Him

Now, before we see the consequences of such foolish, careless, behavior, Paul reiterates the sobering and glorious purpose of the Lord’s Supper in verses 23-26, which we will now consider. [Read vs. 23-26]. Worthy of note here, is that Paul himself, who was certainly not among the Apostles when they had taken the Lord’s Supper with the Lord (just prior to His death), had received the following information and instructions surrounding the ordinance, by direct revelation from the Lord. Notice, he states, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you (to you, Corinthians)...” And so, here we have the Apostolic authority, affirmation and tradition, calling us to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, in accordance with the revelation that Paul had received and transferred to the Gentile Corinthians. And the historical context, within which this ordinance was founded, here described by Paul (delivered to him by divine revelation), secures its origin in the authority of Christ Himself.

And what then is the historical context, within which, the authority for celebrating and partaking of the Lord’s Supper finds its certification? “The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’” And it is right there that this precious

ordinance was born and set to be embraced and followed by the people of God, from that time forward.

And what then is the purpose of the ordinance? Well, Paul gives us a few critical pieces of information here, which lead into his interpretative purpose.

1) Very clearly, the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of "remembrance." "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And so, the Lord's Supper is a remembrance (a memorial) ordinance, where we are called to reflect upon the reality of Christ's vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice for us, in the breaking (killing) of His body and in the shedding of His blood (the pouring out of His very life) for us. His body was broken, not for any wrong that He had done, but specifically for us; for our wrongs, for our offenses, for our many, blatant, known and unknown violations of God's holy Law, which have alienated us from, and made us enemies of, our God. We ponder the reality of what Christ suffered on the cross, and we recognize that He had willfully subjected Himself to that suffering (at the hands of men and demons, and most painfully of all, of God Himself), in our stead. To this end, the bread represents the body of Christ, broken for us, and the cup, the blood of Christ shed for us. And as we partake of both, we profess and acknowledge our unending union with Christ, in His death, which grants us everlasting peace with God. But, this is not all.

2) "In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the New Covenant in *My* blood. This do, as often as you drink it, (again) in remembrance of Me" (vs. 25). When the Lord here states that this cup is the New Covenant in *His* blood, He clearly intimates that by this very act, put into full affect at the cross, He is replacing the Old Covenant, which God had formerly made with Israel, with a New Covenant, which He is making with all who partake in Him.

You see, in the Old Covenant, the people themselves were sprinkled with animal blood, and they were to reflect upon the redemption that God had granted them, through the Passover and the partaking of the pascal lamb (which they were to commemorate every year), as God had brought them out of their bondage and slavery in Egypt. And from that point on, the preface to every call to obedience, given Israel, by God, stood on the foundation of this statement, "I am the Lord your God, who delivered you out of the bondage of Egypt."

But now, here, Christ proclaims a New Covenant, a New Covenant ratified by His own shed blood, such that, as we partake of His body (not an animal lamb, but the Lamb of God) and His blood (the blood of the Covenant) *by faith* (and not literally), we share in all of the benefits that come freely through Christ in this Covenant. And so, when we take of the cup at the Lord's Supper, our part in, and our partaking of, Christ, is there signified and represented in the ordinance. It is not that the elements actually become His literal body or blood. How could that have been, there in the first century, when Jesus was actually present among them. His body was there. Rather, His body and blood are so signified by the actual elements, that to dishonor them, is to dishonor the sacrifice which Christ made, once for all time. And that is why Paul says what he says in the verses that follow. And so, the sanctity of the Lord's Supper is found particularly in what is represented there, in the sacrifice of Christ, and by the fact that the New Covenant is initiated through that very means. And this is why, when we strive to obey God, we look not back to the Israelite Passover, where the Jews were redeemed out of their bondage in Egypt, but rather, to our redemption in Christ, from out of the bondage of *our sins!*

And so, we *remember*; we remember the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, and our inclusion in the New Covenant by this means, as we take of the Supper. And by doing this, Paul moves on to state the ultimate purpose of the ordinance in verse 26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." When Paul begins with the word "For" here, he is highlighting a very significant point to the Corinthians, in light of what he has just stated about the historical account of Jesus's initiating the New Covenant at the Lord's Supper. In other words, he is saying, "Since Christ initiated this New Covenant ordinance, by this very means; by partaking of it when you come together, you are proclaiming the Lord's death till He comes."

Now, what does Paul mean by this? Namely, that this ordinance (the Lord's Supper) fulfills a special purpose, which fills the gap between our Lord's first and final comings. And that purpose is to proclaim, by it's elements/symbols, by the communion of the saints who partake of Christ as one body, and by the mystical presence of the risen Christ among His people as they partake of this ordinance...it proclaims the Lord's death, until He returns. Now, what is the benefit of proclaiming Christ's death, in this way, till He comes? Those who partake,

proclaim in a unique and especially in a *communal* way, that they are in Covenant with God, to be His holy people, on the basis of Christ's vicarious/substitutionary sacrifice. They proclaim this as an encouragement to one another. They proclaim it to themselves, as a means of continually reminding them of their own position in, and union with Christ. And they proclaim it to the outside world, as a sign of God's glorious Covenant with fallen man through Christ. And they continue to do this, as a means of grace and edification; as a means of drinking anew, as it were, from the glorious blessings which are received in and by Christ's one time sacrifice, which continues to cleanse us from present sins, so as to renew us unto continual faithfulness, until Christ returns. [Note: The context in John's Gospel, where Jesus washed His disciples feet. Both, the communal aspect of fellowship in Him is portrayed there, as well as the ongoing cleansing aspect of His atonement—their feet still needed to be cleansed, even though they were already washed, except for Judas Iscariot]

And furthermore, this Supper, which began with the Apostles, just prior to Jesus's death, would continue on, filling the gap, until we all meet in glory with Christ at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. [See Matthew 26:26-29; **Emphasize vs. 29**]

Now, in stating all of this, we can begin to appreciate why Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their defiling the Lord's Supper by their gluttonous, drunken, divisive behavior. And that is why he moves on to give the sobering consequences of treating the Lord's Supper in a casual, careless fashion.

III. The Consequences of Treating the Lord's Supper in a Careless Fashion

[Read verses 27-34].

Now, what is Paul main point in all that he is stating here? Because of the sanctity of the Lord's Supper, and all that is represented within it, we must be careful not to profane it by partaking in it in a careless or ungodly manner. The serious nature of this warning is seen by the fact, that when one partakes of the Supper in an unworthy manner, he sins not simply against the elements which represent Christ's body and blood, but against the actual body and blood of Christ which are therein represented. In other words, while the bread and the cup are not literally the actual body and blood of Christ, because of the sanctity and solemnity of what they represent

(the actual atonement of Christ), to spurn the Supper (to defile the Supper) is an affront upon Christ Himself and His sacrifice. It is as if to trample upon the body and blood of Christ. And that is why eating and drinking in an unworthy manner brings judgment upon the one who does so, and why some in Corinth had gotten sick or died because of doing this.

And so, it is out of this context that Paul brings forth the general principle, which exceeds the specific circumstances surrounding the Corinthians, when he calls for the people of God (as a whole) to examine themselves and to make proper heart preparations before taking the Lord's Supper. It is a holy ordinance, which requires that all participants approach it in a reverent manner. Now, I would assume that, by and large, in our day, we are not over indulging ourselves with the bread to the neglect of others, or getting drunk on wine, but there are certainly ways, in which, we can defile the ordinance, if we partake of it with the wrong heart, or in a spirit of divisiveness, which I will explain in a few moments.

Suffice it to say for now, that I believe that this is what Paul is bringing out for us, so as to govern our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

IV. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

1) Again, while it is important to realize that the elements of the Lord's Supper never transform into the literal body and blood of Christ, and that while they are symbolic (tools for remembrance), that the ordinance is not simply a symbolic ordinance. There is a real, mystical sweet communion that we have with Christ and with each other, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, and I believe that the Lord is indeed present among us in a special way, and that this ought to drive us to be sober minded, reverent and joyful as we partake of the Supper. In other words, it is more significant than just showing symbols, but the elements are not changed. They remain bread and wine/juice. It is a means of grace though, whereby we continually proclaim the Lord's death until He returns. And it is an ongoing preface, as it were, to the glorious Wedding Supper of the Lamb, where Christ's work in us, will be perfect and complete.

2) Keeping in mind that it is the *Lord's* Supper (and not ours), and that He is the Author and host of the ordinance, we must examine ourselves before taking it, to ensure that we do not partake of it in an unworthy manner. Such things to consider would include whether or not there

is sin in our lives, of which, we are still unwilling to repent. If there is undealt with sin in your life, then have dealings with God first, before taking the Supper. Another consideration is whether or not there is an unresolved conflict between you and another brother or sister in Christ. It is hypocritical to enter into communion together, as one body, before the Lord, when there is bitterness or unresolved conflict with someone else who is seeking to enter into that communion. It would be better to work that out first, or to refrain from taking until you have attempted to work that out with your brother/sister in Christ, whom you have offended or who has offended you in some way. All in all, we ought to pray beforehand, and prepare ourselves for the ordinance, reminding ourselves of the sanctity of the event, so that we would not treat it in a loose or casual fashion. Represented here, is the horrific anguish, breaking and dying of the Son of God, for us! How could we ever take that lightly or in a casual manner? [John 6]

3) That said, this Supper is not for the self-righteous. It is for those who are on the path of sanctification, finding themselves still struggling with sin and in desperate need of God's daily grace. This ordinance is for those who still require daily cleansing of remaining sin from Christ's once for all sacrifice. Indeed, as we proclaim His death until He comes, we profess this very thing, and our ongoing dependence upon our Savior, for daily grace, until He returns to make us perfect. It is a re-proclamation of the New Covenant *of Grace*, whereby God continually, legally cleanses us from all unrighteousness, as we confess our sins and come to Him through Christ. And so, if you still struggle with sin (key word = "struggle"), and your hope remains in Christ, then this is for you, Brethren! This is why we partake; yes, with reverence, but also with great joy! We can still serve our God today and tomorrow, because Christ is faithful to this blessed Covenant!

4) Brethren, remember, every time that you take this Supper together, that this is not a private ordinance. This is something that we partake of together, as one body in Christ. And you certainly don't want to lose that communal aspect, and the glory of this communion, when celebrating the ordinance. Together, not alone, but together, we profess our unity in the same Covenant with Christ our head; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all! This is a family

meal. And let it ever compel us to love and seek out the good of each other (and not only ourselves). This is your forever family!

5) The Gospel!!! Are you joined to this Christ and His body, by faith? Amen!!!