

The Lord's Supper

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-34
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Let me encourage you if you have a Bible with you to turn to 1 Corinthians 11 this morning because as we remember the Lord's death, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper I think we would all agree that on this issue there are a lot of different opinions, there's a lot of different approaches, in fact, in any given church on any given day of which they're celebrating the Lord's Supper, you will see it distributed, taken and spoken of in a myriad of different ways. But today as we prepare our hearts to partake of the Lord's Supper, as we prepare to remember, I thought it fitting to go back to the words of scripture, go back to the early church and look at the instructions for the Lord's Supper. Oftentimes our opinions get clouded by tradition and relationships. What does the scripture say about what we're about to participate in?

Beginning in verse 23 of 1 Corinthians 11, it says,

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 shew the Lord's death till he come. 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. 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.

Now today we find ourselves in the first letter to the church at Corinth. If you have any background of this specific local congregation, they struggled. They struggled in the flesh. They struggled with temptation. They struggled getting things in order and when it came to what we know as the Lord's Supper, they were struggling as well. So here we find ourselves just years after Jesus Christ rose from the grave with definitive instructions when we gather to remember the Lord's death, what does it look like, how should it be administered. So let's just address some pretty simplistic questions this morning before we celebrate so that we make sure that our hearts are in line with what scripture has told us.

Let's begin with who started it. Who initiated or who began what we know as the Lord's Supper? Now I don't want to disappoint some of you but it wasn't the Baptists. We didn't start this. It wasn't the Methodists. It wasn't the Presbyterians. It wasn't the Pentecostals. And though they might have been around for a really long time, it wasn't even the Catholics. No, in fact, if you go back to verse 23, it says, "I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night." What we're about to participate in was not even started by the apostles. It was started by Jesus Christ himself. So why is that important? That's so critical to us because we should not allow our traditions to get in the way. We should not allow our opinions to get in the way. We should not allow our, "But I've always heard," get in the way. What we're about to participate in, though it remembers his death, was actually initiated by him.

It's the second question that you may find most intriguing. Why? Why the bread and the juice? I mean, after all, if we're remembering his body and his blood, if we're remembering his death and his eventual resurrection, are the elements that we use that critical? I mean, after all, we're in the South, what's wrong with chicken fingers and sweet tea? I mean, seriously, if we're going to eat and drink something, why don't we at least make it culturally applicable? You know, we discover in scripture there is a reason why we use what we use. In fact, in just a moment when the elements are being passed out and we partake therein, there's going to be a small piece of bread that's going to be very tasteless, and there's going to be a small amount of juice that's going to be somewhat the same. Why not something more flavorful? Why not something more enticing? Why those items?

Well, let's begin with the bread. The bread that we will partake of in just a moment is unleavened, that's code for it doesn't taste good. It's unleavened, it's flat, it's just there's not much there. It's not because that's the easiest thing to distribute. It's not because that's what we've been doing for thousands of years. In fact, it goes all the way back to the book of Exodus. In Exodus 12:18, the Israelites are preparing to flee Egypt. Remember the famous Passover meal? And when the Lord told them to eat the meal, remember eat in haste, keep your shoes on, stand up, be ready to flee Egypt at any point, but the bread that they partake was to be unleavened not because it would take too much time to rise, not because it would delay their exodus out of Egypt, but because the Lord communicated that they were not to have any leaven in their presence and all throughout the Bible leaven is representative of sin. That's why today and in a contemporary context when Jewish people participate in the Passover meal, they spend days getting rid of all

the leaven out of their house, it's a picture of sin. In a moment when we take of the bread, it doesn't matter what tradition may or may not say, biblically we are claiming that Jesus Christ was without sin. We're claiming that though temptation came to him not only in those three forms at the mount but also at other times, that he was without sin at all times. His sinless sacrifice is what allows our sin to be forgiven.

Now what about the juice? Now as a "Baptist," this is probably where I receive the most ridicule. Are we scared of wine? Are we afraid somehow, you know, .7 ounces will somehow get somebody where they can't drive home? I mean, what's going on here? Why don't we, you've heard it said, why don't we use the good stuff? You do realize that the reason for just old fashioned grape juice has nothing to do with prohibition, it has nothing to do with being a Baptist, it has everything to do with your Bible. Back in Deuteronomy 34:12 the grapes as they were entering the Promised Land, remember those grapes that were the size of melons? Listen to how the grapes are described, the pure blood of the grape. You see, when we celebrate with the juice, it is a picture of, it is an emblem of, it's a symbol of the blood of Jesus Christ.

So simplistic bread without leaven for a Savior without sin, and juice to represent blood that was shed on behalf of humanity. Now lest you think that other ways of partaking might be more entertaining, can I remind you biblically the grape is the blood. If you have wine, I'm not trying to be disparaging, I'm just trying to be as biblical as I can, in order to manufacture wine, you have to add sugar, add time, and add heat. When we take of the juice, what we're saying is you don't have to add anything to the blood of Jesus to be saved. You don't have to add time. You don't have to add an exterior element. You don't have to add anything that you might be able to conjure up.

So why we use what we're about to use isn't tradition, it's Bible, which leads to the third question: what's the purpose? What's the purpose in doing this? Why have we as believers been doing this for 2,000 years? Notice what it says in verse 26, "For as often as you eat this bread and you drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he comes." There's really two "what's" here. What are we remembering, number 1. We are remembering his sacrifice. We're remembering that he was willing to take the scourging, he was willing to take the beatings, he was willing to allow himself to be placed through what he was on our behalf. We remember those seven statements that he made, that final one, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." We remember all the things that took place that Passion Week, that crucifixion day, and ultimately that resurrection day. But it's also an opportunity to relish in something. Notice it says that we do so till he come. You know, earlier in verse 2 of chapter 11, the Apostle Paul says that when you gather as believers, there are the ordinances that you celebrate. We know those ordinances or those mannerisms as baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is that which we will see in just a moment is a display on the outside of a transformation that's happened on the inside that takes place after one has believed in Jesus Christ. It takes place one time. There's no need for a second testimony. There's no need to display that a second time. But the Lord's Supper is something that the people of faith are to participate in until he comes. So as we remember his death, as we remember what he was willing to go through, we also relish the fact that there's coming a day where not only did he arise

from the grave but he called those who were dead in Christ and those who are alive in Christ to rise up together with him.

There's only one final question: how? How are you and I to participate? How are we to partake here in a few moments? And if you'll notice beginning in verse 27, what we're about to address is the lengthiest part of the discourse. Why is that? Because I don't think they were really that confused about the bread and the juice, I don't think they were necessarily that confused of the fact that Jesus started this, I mean, we're just a few years post the resurrection, but you get the idea that they were showing up and participating, their heart wasn't in the right place, their mind wasn't in the right place, and they were doing everything the opposite way that it should have been done.

So to summarize these last seven or eight verses, how is it that one should participate in the Lord's Supper not according to tradition, not according to a denomination, not according to what your grandparents taught you but according to the Bible? There is this word that keeps popping up, "unworthily." That's a strong word. Allow me to classify it in two areas.

1. How we participate. The Lord's Supper is not for everybody. In fact, in just a moment, understand that as the elements go by, if you, your neighbor or someone around you decides to not participate, that's not for you to determine, to judge, or to make any comment about. This is between an individual and God and not everybody is supposed to participate. You say, "What do you mean, not everybody is supposed to participate? We're at church, that's what we do." No. How can you remember the Lord's death if you've never called on him to save you? You see, the Lord's Supper is only for believers. It's not for the rest of the world. What we're about to participate in is only for those who've come to an understanding that they have a sin condition that only Jesus can solve and that by believing on his life, his death and resurrection, they've called on him to save them. So the only ones who are supposed to remember are those who are saved.

But then there's the second category because there were many there in Corinth that were already believers but you notice that there's a struggle in some different areas. Here's the second category: a person who is already a believer who is living in unconfessed, unrepentant sin. That's basically what this passage says. So maybe you're here this morning and you say, "Man, I've been saved for years. I've been saved for decades." But maybe there's that area of your life, maybe there's that compartment of your life, maybe there's an aspect of your life that hasn't been given over to the Lord that you're struggling with and right now your heart is not in the right place, your mind is not in the right place, then this is not the time.

Now I know what some of you are thinking: are we just going to pass the trays and nobody take one because we all fit in one of those categories? No. You see, in just a moment we're going to have a time of prayer and maybe you're that person here today that walked in not knowing Jesus. While we pray, this would be the time to call upon him. You see, you call upon him, you ask him to forgive you of your sins and save you. Once you call upon him and you're his child, you can remember the death that he did on

your behalf. And as a believer, maybe you walked in today with unconfessed sin, maybe you walked in today with things that are sideways between you and the Lord. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9 if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them. So what may appear to disqualify all of us in just a moment because of his body and blood, it can qualify every single one of us.

So either A this morning, we need to be saved so we can truly remember, or for those of us that are saved, we need to confess our sins so that we're in the right state in order to take. So in just a moment, I'm going to have a time of prayer with us. While I'm praying, our men are going to be making their way to the front as we prepare to distribute the elements. This would be that time to prepare your hearts for the taking of the Lord's Supper.

Let's pray together with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. If you're that individual this morning who has never called on the Lord, would this be the time? It's not a course you have to pass or a test you have to take. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and where you're seated, where you're watching online right now, if you will simply confess to the Lord that you've got a sin problem and that you believe that Jesus Christ alone is able to save you, just call out to him, ask him to forgive you, ask him to save you. But maybe today you've already had that conversation with the Lord and maybe you brought in some of that spiritual baggage that needs to be unloaded, maybe right now is a time of confession, right now is that time where you just lay it out with the Lord and you just share with him what he already knows is happening in your life. May we all be prepared properly to partake.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of remembrance, God, we come to remember your goodness, your grace, and your mercy. We've come to thank you for your willingness to save us in spite of ourselves and, Lord, help us today to truly remember who you are in our lives and what you saved us from and what you saved us to. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.