

The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective
"The Holy Spirit and Communion"
I Corinthians 11:23–34
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In this study we will partake in the Lord's Supper and in preparation I'd like to begin by reading the text for this study. I Corinthians 11:23–34 says [23] *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, [24] 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."* [25] *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."* [26] *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—[34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

The Lord's Supper replaces the Old Covenant meal of the Passover. The Passover was a meal that involved meticulous preparation and had multiple, symbolic dynamics to it. It also was a meal that required sacrifice and that meal was pointing to Jesus Christ. In the Old Covenant that meal was given under Moses under the administration of God's Covenant in the days of Moses. That meal would be an everlasting memorial. It begs the question, if it is an everlasting memorial meal then why are we not still partaking of it?

That is answered profoundly by the fact that we do partake of it, in Christ. Much of the material in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles to give us, is devoted to letting us know that Jesus is the One who has removed the leaven from our sins. Jesus is the One who is the Passover Lamb and the sacrifice for our sins. So He has fulfilled all sacrifices, including the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb as the Lamb of God.

So the meal we come to now, just like the Old Covenant meal, points by precept and practice to the Lord's death. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death but it's a meal that proclaims the Lord's death backwards. The Old Covenant meal proclaimed the necessity of a substitutionary sacrificial Lamb for sinners. This meal announces that death has been given and the Lord has received it. He has satisfied it justice therefore we come to a meal that doesn't point forward to another sacrifice. It points backwards in a bloodless meal to the Given Sacrifice.

In the text, the Lord said 'I took this body to bear your sins at the cross.' So we come to the bread remembering, not prophesying, the fulfillment of prophecy in the death of Christ as He took our sins there on the cross. As He was on that cross His blood poured forth to pay for all of our sins. The Bible tells us that life is in the blood and as Jesus gives His life blood He

now pays for our sins, not simply with the physical death but by undergoing the death of eternity, hell itself, as the agony of the cross is not consumed or assumed or summed up in the physical torture of the death, but in the agony of His soul saying 'My God, My God why has Thou forsaken Me.' There as He pours forth His blood He drinks for us the cup of God's wrath. He had already asked if there was any way that this cup could pass from Him to let it pass yet in surrender He says 'yet not My will but Thine be done.'

That is something profound that we need to think about as you remember the substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus and as you come to the bread and the fruit of the vine. As you take of it here is what you need to know. Christ gave Himself and the Father put the Son to death for you. I have said this before but I want to say it again. This is why preaching is still important. Nothing can exactly express the two dynamics of the cross – Christ's death for us under the judgment of the Father and the agony of His soul. All movies that try to express this get too consumed with the physical elements of Christ's death but where we get consumed is in the agony of His soul as the Son is separated from the Father and the Father crushes the Son for you and me that we might have everlasting life.

It is that glorious truth of the foundation of our salvation that we celebrate every time we partake in the Lord's Supper. Notice in the text that it doesn't say how often we are to celebrate it but it does say 'often.' It says 'for as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup' and it has a very specific purpose. Briarwood has chosen to walk in the path of the Reformers. They chose not to emphasize the importance of the Lord's Supper by its weekly regularity but by its intentionality. They would even have communion seasons where people would camp in the vicinity of the church. This was founded by the Church of Scotland. People would camp out from Wednesday to Sunday for what they call the Communion Season while everyone was preparing their hearts for Communion. There would be preaching every night.

I'm currently reading a book on the Revivals of Scotland. It is absolutely amazing how many revivals broke out on Fridays. When you look at the history of the Church of Scotland you will see why. On Wednesday they would gather for preaching that continued on Thursday. On Friday they would gather again for preaching but at the end of the Friday service they would have to come to the elders to be examined to come to the Table. It was not to find out if you were worthy but for them to ask you if you were coming in a manner worthy. Are you examining yourself? Under the preaching of God's Word members of Christ's church there would examine themselves to prepare for the Table and would be deeply convicted of their sins. They would flee afresh and anew to their Savior. It would spill over to the conversion of others. Then what happened personally was multiplied corporately in churches and then throughout the land. Thus revivals would break out during those Communion Seasons.

I had a man say to me one time 'Harry, I think every church ought to have a revival meeting.' I'm not opposed to that by any means. I'd love for a church to have a revival every week but I reminded him of something we just articulated that the Lord knows you need which is why He gives it to you. It is the regular observance of the Lord's Supper for renewal, revival and refreshment.

Unlike baptism that replaces circumcision, the Lord's Supper is done multiple times because it deals with the matter of our life in Christ and for Christ. It is so easy for those of us who are sensitive to our sins and our lack of progress in Christ, to become discouraged. We need to come back to our foundation in Christ, which is not our progress but the cross. It is not that we shouldn't remain sensitive to our progress and to the sins left yet in our lives that we want to

annihilate, but God basically brings you back. Your acceptance is not based on your performance but what God's Son did for you on the cross.

Likewise there are some of us who begin to think in pride that we are accepted by our performance but here let the Table remind you that if you have progress yet to make then praise the Lord but that does not commend you to Me. It is My Son who commends you to Me. It is at the cross where My Son made you right with Me. So He attacks our discouragement at the Table. He attacks our pride at the Table and He refreshes, renews, revives and recalibrates us so that we are now moving forward in our life with Christ with a sure foundation of the victory of Christ at the cross.

It's interesting that the Lord's Supper practiced regularly, does not highlight the virgin birth, although it assumes it, and it does not highlight the resurrection, although it assumes it. Clearly He assumes the resurrection when He says for us to practice it until He comes again. He wouldn't come again if He is still in the grave. The Lord's Supper assumes the Second Coming but it brings you back to the foundation at the cross. The Gospel is the Word of the victory of Christ for His people at the cross. So He recalibrates us that we might live with hatred of sin and the love of Christ filling our soul.

When grasped rightly, wouldn't that set us on the track of assassinating sin and pursuing holiness for Christ, not for salvation but for Christ? Wouldn't that set us on the journey to find sinners that do not yet know this message who still think they can work their way to heaven? Does this not move us in our soul for our friends and those who do not yet know Christ? I know you might be thinking 'but I have shared with them time and time again.' I have no idea how many times my grandfather, grandmother, parents and preachers shared the Gospel with me and then one day God granted me eyes to see and ears to hear.

I want to conclude my thoughts by sharing with you something I did this last week as we prepare to come to the Table with some time of silent reflection. I went to get my annual check-up this last week and while I was there, nearby is a retirement village for missionaries and pastors of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church which is the church I spent most of my childhood in growing up.

I had three pastors in my childhood church. All three of them faithfully preached the Gospel in that Missionary Alliance Church. I want to share a personal moment with you. My wife, Cindy and I were able to find one of those three pastors who is in his late eighties now. He sadly has some memory issues in his old age and his wife is still taking care of him. Do you remember the movie *The Wizard of Oz*? Do you remember the person behind the curtain? That is who is always helping these pastors. The person behind the curtain is the wife. This retired pastor of mine was kind of coming in and out of our conversation and then he looked at me and said "You know, I have been following your ministry and denomination from a distance for which I am grateful. I wanted to ask you a question that has been on my mind as I have followed you. Was there anything I ever said that God used in your life?"

It was very difficult for me to control my emotions when he asked that. Aren't we all like that? As we are ready to meet the Lord, we know our hope is in the Lord and we just kind of want to know if we made a difference for Jesus to someone. I looked at this ex-pastor of mine and said "You're good for the last thing you would have thought when you were my pastor is that you were making a difference in my life. There is a reason why when I started dating Cindy and found out she was into preaching, I found out to date her I had to go to church, there is a reason I didn't bring her back to your church. If I had brought her back to your church it would have blown my cover quickly. As you looked on me you probably thought nothing you were

saying was making a difference. I want you to know that you made a great difference and out of God's Providence I didn't come to saving faith until I had moved on from your ministry but I came to saving faith through your ministry. You made a difference in my life."

My dear friends, you may be thinking you are throwing seed on hard ground but all we have to do is keep throwing seed. The Holy Spirit will take care of the ground. That is my last thought. This Table brings you back to Christ. It is a witness to the sufficiency of Christ. I pray that the Holy Spirit will be with you as you come to the Table for the Holy Spirit has come to point you to Christ. One of the instruments He uses is this Table. As you meditate on Scripture one of the things that God has appointed that you will focus upon is the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to focus you upon Christ. For put no confidence in the flesh for it is the Spirit who gives life. My Words are Spirit and life.

Finally, ask the Holy Spirit to show you the sins that Jesus has paid for which you would like to confess to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you as He focuses and recalibrates you to Christ and the victory of the cross. Ask Him to fill you with the power of an unstoppable love for Christ. As we come to the Table, the love of Christ will constrain our soul and compel our lives. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments that You have prepared for us as You have invited us to this meal. You enjoy us to partake of this meal and we enjoy this meal not because of the sumptuous elements but because of the nourishment of our soul. So as we receive and take the bread and the cup, will You fill our soul with the Reason for our saving grace, with the anchor of saving faith and with the love of our Savior who sent us out into this world for Christ, in whose Name I pray, Amen.