

VIII. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“The Lord’s Supper and Revival”

I Corinthians 11:17–34

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We will be looking at this glorious text on the Lord’s Supper from I Corinthians 11. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is true. I Corinthians 11:17–34 says [17] *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. [18] 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, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] 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.*

[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 grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I’m going to ask for your focused direction in a specific area as we come to this study. The title of this study is ‘The Lord’s Supper and Revival’ so why would I say that? It’s more than me tying this into our series on revival for I believe the Lord’s Supper is divinely designed as a regular instrument for your renewal and your revival personally and us corporately as a church. In other words, every Lord’s Supper service is designed by God for renewal and revival in His people but this glorious instrument can be misused as well.

There are two things in the opening verse that I don’t want you to miss. The first thing is when he say ‘when you come together.’ That is an interesting phrase. The Greek word for church is Ecclesia and it’s a noun that means ‘the called together ones.’ Essentially what Paul has done is used the verb form of that noun. This phrase is found five times in the passage from I Corinthians 11:17–34. He uses phrases like ‘when you gather’, ‘when you assemble’, ‘when the church meets’, ‘when you come together’ and this is something God has provided for us. So

pretty quickly we see that the Lord's Supper is not something for personal administration, nor specific groups in the church but it is something to be celebrated in the assembling of the entire church 'when we come together.'

When we come together we are to partake of the Lord's Supper and the second phrase from this opening verse is that when we come together for the Lord's Supper 'it's not for the better but for the worse.' This tells me that the Lord's Supper is designed by God for my better, for me to grow. That automatically tells me that all of us need to grow. Nobody is perfect. You can't get better if you're already perfect so this Supper is for God's people to grow, to be renewed, to be refreshed and it recalibrates us. That is how revival is taking place for it recalibrates our focus but it's possible that you misuse the Lord's Supper and what was designed for our good actually becomes a liability.

In fact in this text it says the Lord has had to discipline some and some are weak, sick and some He has even taken on (death) because of the way they were misusing the Lord's Supper to defame the Lord and humiliate others. We aren't judge like the world but we are being disciplined by the Lord. So the Lord's Supper is a sacred Supper designed for our benefit but can become a liability if we do not embrace it properly. The Supper is there for us to be revived from the Lord on a regular basis. In the life and ministry of this church we do it ten times every year in order to be renewed and revived in the Lord. What is it that accomplishes that?

The definition of revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. There are some ordinary people reading this today. We are in an ordinary place known as Birmingham, although I tell people to visit hear so it won't be such a culture shock when you get to heaven (smile). I think it's kind of a special place in one way. Ordinary means are through preaching, prayer, fellowship and the sacraments. There is baptism and now the Lord's Supper for the better and not for the worse.

One of the reasons we have a heart for revival is because we have a heart for our nation. We are praying that God would send a Gospel awakening to our nation even as we are committed to the Gospel going to all the nations and to all the nations who are coming to this nation. It is a joy to be serving alongside all of our ethnic congregations and our international Sunday school class. This revival only happens through a revived church so God give revival to your church in this nation! Bring an extraordinary work of your grace through ordinary people in ordinary places through these ordinary means that for an extraordinary purpose to see the Gospel of the Kingdom sweep thousands of people into see Christ.

The Bible is full of such revivals that lead to awakenings and history is full of them but there are two that stand out to me. One is the revival in Jerusalem in the Upper Room where 120 were revived there and then out into the temple square and the temple mount and thousands were brought to Christ from those who had come from all the nations. As the thousands assembled to come together it said 'they were continually devoting themselves to the Apostles teaching, to the fellowship, to prayer and to the breaking of the bread, the Lord's Supper. In other words, the Lord's Supper became a constant instrument of revival and renewal in the life of that church.

A second great movement that led to a revival and a glorious Gospel awakening is something that we're celebrating this year. We are in the year 2017 and five hundred years ago on October 31 Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Those 95 theses were used of God to ignite something called the Reformation. That was a glorious movement of the Gospel that spread to nations and keeps spreading to this day for 500 years. One of the things that was reclaimed for the life of the people was the Lord's Supper.

Five hundred years ago if you had walked into a church you would not have had a Bible or a hymn book and you would have heard no preaching, no Bible reading and all would have been in a language that you didn't know. It would have been something that you watched and would not have participated in. The Table would have been removed, lifted up and inaccessible unless other men allowed it. Today you have a Bible. Today this Table isn't lifted up for it's down where you are but the pulpit is lifted up and a way has been opened for you. You are hearing God's Word in your language. You have it in your hands. The preaching of it is for you to hear. In other words, the revival ministry of the Lord's Supper had been reclaimed from superstition and inaccessibility. Now you have access to it but do we come in a way that is better or worse?

How do we come to the Lord's Supper? Because of the importance of the Lord's Supper I want you to make full use of the Lord's Supper each and every time it's offered for your benefit. I want you to see how this is for the better and not for the worse in your life each time you come to the Lord's Table. There are ten things I want to outline for you that will help you as you prepare to come to the Table. We want to come to the Table as an instrument of renewal, revival and recalibration so here are some things that will help us do that.

The first one is that we come in a manner worthy. These things I'm giving you come from this text in I Corinthians 11. This is not saying that we are worthy. It says to come in a manner worthy and then the text tells us what a worthy manner is. You are prepared. You examine yourself in your relationship to the Lord, to the body of Christ and other believers. When we have the Lord's Supper here we always announce it before we have it so that you can prepare yourself to come to the Table. If you come to the Table and you have aught against your brother you are called of God to get that settled before you come to the Table. If I have hidden peace treaties with sin before God I'm called to deal with Him before I come to the Table. So I am to examine myself before I come to the Table to come to the Table in a manner worthy.

Secondly, is the primacy of preaching. The pulpit is lifted up and you never come to the Table without the pulpit having been used for the preaching of God's Word. This is because you are about to partake of Jesus' blood and body, not physically but spiritually by faith. Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ. That began to sweep 500 years ago as churches took the pulpits that were tacked onto the side column and put them in the middle. No longer was the Lord's Table up in a superstitious notion of salvation but now brought to the floor accessible by God's people. God's people are prepared personally and then prepared by preaching so that they can come to partake of Jesus by faith with the primacy of the preaching of God's Word.

Thirdly, is the placement of the Table and the minister. Here the Table is accessible to you. These things we ought to know for they contribute to the better as you participate in the Lord's Supper. You don't see us in the Reformation Church bring the Table to you and stand between you and the Table. You don't come through the minister to get to the Table. You go to Jesus. This is His Table and in Jesus you come to the Table. That is why I never stand in front of it but always behind it. The elders then bring the elements to you but they receive them last for they are servants and we thank God for their shepherding. Those things are making a very clear statement that is there to remove any notion of the exaltation of any institution or any individual but that you would recalibrate and come back to Christ, His body and His blood in your life.

Fourthly are the elements Divinely designated. We didn't come up with these elements. God set them aside. The fruit of the vine is bittersweet because our sins are bitter but God's grace is greater in its sweetness. The leaven is where God has removed the leaven of our sin

from us. It is the unleavened bread that proclaims that. He has pointedly brought this Table with these normal every day common elements for a holy and sacred use just like He takes common men and women like me and you and uses us for a holy purpose.

Fifthly, are the elements that are given. How do the elements come to you? You don't come up and grab them, you don't earn them, because they are given to you. The body and blood of Christ is *given* for you. This is a statement of God's grace in providing our Savior for us.

Sixthly, the elements are then received by you. They are received as God uses elders to bring them to you and He uses each one of you to give to each other – the priesthood of the believers. That is a great moment when you turn to the person next to you even as the Disciples that day received the bread and the cup and then turned and gave it to each other. So we do as God uses us in each other's lives.

Seventhly, the elements are taken. Take eat, take drink and we're able to do that because God's grace has taken us from death unto life. We were dead in our sins and now we're alive. We can believe and follow Christ. We can take, eat and receive. He has given us the ability to focus upon Him, to walk with Him and to receive what He has given to us.

The eighth one is a glorious truth that they bring our focus to one place and that is Christ through what He did on the cross. When you come to this Table there is the echo of a Table in the past. The Table in the past is the Passover Feast from the Old Covenant where the leaven is removed and the lamb is slain but that bloody meal is done away with because it is fulfilled in Christ who is our Passover. At this Table we sacrifice no lamb but we celebrate the Lamb of God whose sacrifice has saved us – His body and His blood.

We see the virgin birth, the cross of Christ, the empty tomb of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the second coming of Christ and all of those are embedded in the Lord's Supper but one is singled out for our focus which is the body and blood of Christ, the cross, which is the sacrifice of Christ and remembering what He had done for us. Now that sacrifice is meaningless without the virgin birth. That sacrifice was affirmed by His resurrection, He is ascended and we do this until He comes again and that means He is coming again. The Lord's Supper is putting you back to the cross because some are very sensitive to your sin and you are grieving over it. So He is reminding you at the Table of the cross where He paid for your sins and while praising God for your life of committed holiness, it's not your holiness that gets His love. His love has already been poured out at the cross for you. Then there is some of us who get insensitive to our sins and this Table reminds us of what our sins cost God and how much we ought to hate our sin and make no pact of friendship with sin in our life. This Table recalibrates us back to the cross of Christ where the love of God met the holiness of God and sinners were saved by the grace of God to the glory of God. The Word of the cross, Christ, is our life and the cross secures our hope.

Number nine is a resolve to share that with others – evangelism resolve. You proclaim the Gospel until He comes again. When we gather to celebrate this we're going to scatter to tell people about it.

Finally and number ten this Table will be celebrated until He comes again and that takes us to another Table, a Table in the future. It's the wedding feast, the Table of the Lamb where we will go there to be with Him to sit with Him at that Table. Here this Table we partake of Him but at that Table we will be sitting with Him.

So every time this Supper is done it's revival time. We are recalibrated, refreshed and renewed as we come to the Lord's Table so that Christ alone is the Center. When you look at

this world it's identity everything – your identity is this or that or that. Our identity is simple. It's Jesus. We're Christians. No matter what color we are or where we've come from we are aware of all the dynamics in the life but Christ is our life. The cross is our Hope. Christ is the Center. Christ is the Circumference. Christ is the Substance. Christ is the Sum of our life and the Table both shouts and whispers to our hearts.

The Table lets us know that you're never so far away that the Savior cannot reach you and you're never so close that you don't need to be closer. The Table says as one of my professors said to me 'you're never so bad that Jesus can't save you from your sins and you're never so good that you don't need your Savior to remove your sins.' Come, taste, drink and see that the Lord is good. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, as we come to this Table come and meet with us by Your Spirit. May we focus upon Jesus, die to ourselves, love one another and bring the mercy and Gospel of grace to the world. Refresh us. Renew us. Recalibrate us. Revive our very soul in these moments for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

- I. Come in a Manner Worthy – prepared
- II. Primacy of Preaching
- III. Placing of Table and Minister
- IV. Elements Divinely Designated
- V. Elements Given
- VI. Elements Received
- VII. Elements Taken
- VIII. Cross our Focus – Another Table Past
- IX. Evangelism Resolve
- X. Coming Again – Another Table Future