

The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective
"The Reformation and the Lord's Supper"
I Corinthians 11:17–34
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I Corinthians 11:23–26 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.*

I am now in my 20th year of ministry here at Briarwood and what a privilege. God has been so gracious to allow me to be here for that amount of time and in preparation for this study I thought about how many times I have preached on this text. I think I am at 31 times as we come to the Lord's Supper. I have used other texts as we come to the Lord's Supper but this has been the primary one. In the church we're told that this is the Word of institution. Coming at it freshly is always a challenge but one of the blessings as a preacher of the Word is that God's Word is unfathomable. One text begins to pull a thread that never stops pulling all the way to the infinite glory of Christ as our Lord and Savior. The challenge is how to come back to it for the Lord to teach us something afresh and anew.

There are a couple of things I'd like to share with you and even more specifically in the context of Reformation. The Lord's Supper and the Reformation on the one hand is a glorious moment yet on the other hand it's a moment of angst. The Lord's Supper was shrouded with superstition in the corruption of the clergy and the practices of the 16th century church. It has lost its ever present assigned place to be a benefit to the people of God when they assembled. In fact, they weren't even allowed to participate. They could hear it being done and periodically see the elements. When they were watching they weren't even hearing it in a language that most of them would be able to understand. So the Lord's Supper was rescued from the corruption of the church and was then brought to the people for their benefit. So in that it's a glorious blessing because in the Word we are told to come together for the better, not for the worse for this is a means of grace for God's people.

The Lord's Supper does cause angst for me as well. The angst centers around one of my favorite paintings that I have a replication of and that is the Colloquy of Marburg. It was at the Colloquy at Marburg that the Reformers came together and they tried to solve their disagreements over the Lord's Supper. They were all agreed in rescuing it from the superstition of the Roman church but they had not yet been able to come together in its proper administration and come to an agreement. They all appealed to the Scripture and the Colloquy of Marburg becomes the point where the separation of their views was seen and sealed and we pretty much have it today.

By in large there are four views on the Lord's Supper. One view was the view that the Roman church had. That view focuses on the passage in I Corinthians 11:23–24 which 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."* When it says "this is my

body' that means at the point of consecration by the priest, the elements – the cup and the bread – become the actual glorified, physical body of Christ.

While the Bible is clearly supra-logical it is never illogical. So the Reformers would refute that view by saying 'how can it be the glorified body of Christ since we know the glorified body can be seen and is in a place at the right hand of the Father and will remain in that place until He comes again?' Secondly, they would say 'if that is the body of Christ, the bread is broken and the wine/cup is poured then that is tantamount to a re-sacrifice of Christ.' In I Peter 3:18 we see that Christ died once and for all for our sins and His atoning death does not need to be repeated, must not be seen as repeated and was a once and for all event that satisfied the justice of God to pay for the sins of all of His people.

Martin Luther, hanging on to this, wanted to distance himself from this matter of transubstantiation where the substances transpose itself into the actual body and blood of Christ so he created a view that was consubstantiation, where the body of Christ comes in with and under the elements of the bread. The difference between this and transubstantiation escapes me but I will rest upon his way of explaining it which is primarily that the elements don't transpose themselves into the body and blood of Christ but the body and blood of Christ come in it, with it and under it. The illustration would be such as a bowl with water where you put a sponge in it, squeeze the sponge and it absorbs the water. It looks like a sponge but in it, with it, alongside of it and through it comes the water. That would be my best illustration of consubstantiation.

Some of us still have the problem that the body of Christ is not something that is disseminated in such a manner that it really is a glorified body that is in a place and He is able to be anywhere in that body but the Bible tells us that He is at the right hand of the Father in that body.

Then the Zwinglian's (people who agreed with Ulrich Zwingli) had their view which is followed by our Baptist brothers to this day and that is that Jesus expects us to have the common sense to know that His glorified body is at the right hand of the Father, the sacrifice was once and for all, that His blood is not poured out in consubstantiation or transubstantiation and that these are symbols. The symbols are there to remember Him and this became known as the memorial view where we memorialize the death of Christ by the breaking of the bread which represents the sacrificial giving of His body on our behalf (not the breaking of His body for Scripture says not a bone of His was broken, John 19:36). So according to this view the Lord's Supper is there for sacred significance and memorialized what Christ did.

The Reformation had a fourth view. I usually reserve the one that I have embraced for life for the last one so this is where I am in my reformed view. This view absorbs the Zwinglian view in that these are not transposed or translated to the body and blood of Christ such as the doctrine of transubstantiation and ultimately the doctrine of consubstantiation, but that it's more than a memorial view. In fact, Christ is spiritually present in the giving of the elements. Physically He is at the right hand of the Father and from there He shall come again at the last time. Some would say 'how can He be at the right hand of the Father and be spiritually present with us and these elements?' It is the same way He tells us in the Great Commission.

Jesus says in Matthew 28:19–20 [19] *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And **behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**”* He is with us in Spirit, spiritually. This is why many times Paul calls the work of the Holy Spirit, sent from Christ to us, the Spirit of Christ, for He was with Him from the womb to the tomb and back to glory. He has now been sent from Him to you and when the Holy Spirit is

with you then Jesus is with you. So Jesus with His Word is now Spiritually present to minister His benefits to us.

So I would reject transubstantiation and consubstantiation but appreciative of my Lutheran brothers who make the move away from transubstantiation and grateful for my Baptist brothers who affirm the right use of the elements in the sense of their representation, but I do believe that it is more than representation. I do believe that you spiritually in these moments we partake in the Lord's Supper that we feast upon Jesus. He is not re-sacrificed. He is still at the right hand of the Father but the Holy Spirit through the Word of God now ministers to you through these elements, set aside from an ordinary use to an extraordinary use. Just as the ordinary use will nurture your body, their extraordinary use will nurture your soul.

The second thing I want to share with you from the Reformation for your benefit and encouragement in the Lord is the part in I Corinthians 11:24–26 that when you partake of the Lord's Supper you do it in remembrance of Him – Remember Me – and you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. It says in the text His body is for you so He sacrificed Himself for you. The Lord's Supper brings us to Christ and Him crucified.

I praise God for the manger but the Lord's Supper doesn't bring us to the virgin birth. It assumes the virgin birth but that's not where it brings our focus. I praise God for the resurrection of Jesus but the Lord's Supper does not bring us to the empty tomb, for it assumes the empty tomb. I praise God that He is interceding for us and is now enthroned on High yet we are not brought to the crown of Christ at the Lord's Supper, although it affirms that He rules, reigns and has defeated all His enemies. I praise God that He is coming again yet we're not brought to the trumpet at the Lord's Supper. We are brought to the cross and the One who went to the cross for us, Christ, for it is there that the grace of God through the Son of God satisfied the holiness of God by the love of God to save sinners to the glory of God.

This is our hope, the cross. Now the cross would be meaningless if there wasn't a virgin birth, because if Jesus is a son of Adam He needs His own Savior. This is the new Adam. The resurrection is God's way to proclaim that Jesus has accomplished His task. He was delivered up because of our transgressions and He was raised because of our justification. The resurrection announces His victory. His second coming will bring consummation and the enemies He defeated He will destroy. And His people who were His enemies who are now His, He will bring to be with Him and it's at the cross we are brought when we gather for the Lord's Supper. I praise God for all of that.

I love that hymn, *Alas and Did My Savior Bleed* that says;
*At the cross, at the cross where
I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!*

This table brings us to Calvary and that's how He refreshes us, recalibrates us, renews us, and revives us. If you're serious about obeying Jesus then you come to this Table with some disappointments because you haven't obeyed Him like you want to, have you? If you have obeyed Jesus to some degree of blessing then you come to the Table with humility because you know it was only by His grace and you need to be encouraged where you faltered. You need to embrace humility where you succeeded. That is why He brings us to the cross. We are both humbled and lifted up. It was there that He delivered you from your sins.

My third thought as you come to the Table is another part of the I Corinthians 11 text. It is the latter part of I Corinthians 11:23 which 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..* First of all I find it interesting that Paul says 'I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you' because Paul wasn't there in the first institution of the Lord's Supper. So when did Jesus give it to Him? There are two explanations for that.

One is that Jesus gave this to him by His Spirit through men like Peter and John who would have discipleshiped him and informed him. When Paul came to Jerusalem he learned from the Disciples while he was there but at first they didn't want anything to do with him. Later Barnabas took care of that and introduced them so he spent time with them.

Secondly, we also know Paul was taken out into the wilderness perhaps up to three years where he was alone with the Lord. Therefore he fulfilled the Apostolic requirement that the Apostle had to be with Someone who had witnessed the resurrection of Christ and it is there he would have witnessed the resurrected Christ as He would have taught him. Perhaps it's there he received this from the Lord. In other passages Paul says things like 'this I give you as a commandment from the Lord.'

So as Paul gets this from the Lord he takes the time to write down, 'He who was betrayed.' The Greek word for betrayed is interesting. Some translations say 'He was handed over' which is very consistent with the Gospel accounts, where Judas handed Him over with a kiss, out of malevolence to the authorities. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. As you go through the Gospel accounts Judas isn't the only one who handed Him over. The soldiers handed Him over to the authorities. The Sanhedrin handed Him over to Pilot. Pilot attempted to hand Him over to the people, but we see Judas, according to the predetermined plan of God, willingly betray Him and hand Him over.

As you come to the Table, realizing that, and say to the Lord 'O God, let me never betray my Savior for if I would betray my Savior let me not live that moment but bring me that I would never betray Him.' It was not only Judas and others who handed Him over out of malevolence but the reason they could hand Him over is because the Father had handed Him over to the cross out of benevolence to save us from our sins. The Father sent Him. The Father crushed Him in our place with the judgment from the Father that was due to us. Oh the majesty and glory of the God of glory who would give His only Son and hand Him over for the judgment that was due to me and you.

What a love that is unfathomable! For it is the love of Christ who would give Himself over and the love of the Father who would hand His Son over so that we could be saved. We have been bought with a price. I thank God for the Reformation that reclaimed this Supper so that we could take a Table and instead of exalting a Table, we exalt Christ – to bring the Table from an elevated position down to where we can come to it and have leaders who will minister its elements to you, not in front of it as if you have to come through the leaders, but from behind it because you have come through Christ, who came for you and was handed over for you by the Father. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take some time in personal confession before the Lord. Father, I thank You so much that we come to the Table, not by superstition but by revelation and illumination. We come by Your Word with the Spirit of God teaching that Word to our very hearts. Now Father, we who come with the illumination of the Holy Spirit and of the revelation of Your Word, come to feast upon

our Savior through the elements that will be administered. As we come to the Table and embrace these elements, fix the eyes of our heart upon Jesus by faith. May we feast upon Him and it is not the quantity of this Supper that fills us up to overflowing but it is the One who brings the benefits to us through this Supper, who fills our souls and our hearts. Fill us to overflowing so that we who have gathered to come to the Table that when we scatter we'll be able to tell others of this Savior but in these moments come and minister Jesus. Your people are here. Some of us need to be humbled at the Table. Some of us need to be lifted up at the Table. All of us need to sense Your presence. Each of us need to look back at the cross even as we anticipate Your coming again and we desire to draw close to You in these moments of intimacy, not to live in a closet for and with Jesus, but to feast in the closet to burst forth into this world to tell the world there is a Savior, who has been sent by the Father and gave Himself for you on the cross who will give you His Spirit to bring you to glory. God I have asked much for this Table and its administration to Your people but I ask without hesitation for we have a great Savior for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.