

THE LORD'S SUPPER



*The Practice and Principles
of the Lord's Supper*

A series by Pastor David Legge

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The Lord's Supper - Chapter 1

"The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper – Part 1"

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I want you to turn with me in your New Testament to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 please - and, as announced, I'll be speaking this morning on 'The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper'. I had anticipated spending one Sunday morning on this, but due to the amount of material that I have, I'm going to split it into at least two Sunday mornings - so two weeks from now we'll take up the issue again, and it may well evolve into three or more Sunday mornings depending on how I feel the Lord leads regarding this.

But we'll look this morning at 1 Corinthians 11, beginning to read at verse 23, Paul says: *"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: 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. 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. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 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. But let a man", or for that matter a woman, "examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 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".*

So our subject today, and in a couple of weeks time, is 'The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper'. Now let me make two preliminary remarks. First: it is impossible to deal with every issue related to the Supper of the Lord in two or even three weeks, and so I will not be entering into a critique regarding the errors of others perhaps, and even ourselves, in how we might remember the Lord. That would take a whole series of studies I think. There is a place for such teaching, I believe, but my objective is to exhort true believers to remember the Lord, and to obey that command biblically. But there are many errors regarding how those who profess Christianity remember the Lord. Indeed Erwin T. Lutzer, the pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, in his book 'Deserving of Tears' quotes Philip Melancthon, the friend of Martin Luther - and if you know anything about the Reformation, you will know that after Catholicism the Protestant Church had a great debate, a very painstaking debate over the Lord's Table. Philip Melancthon says this: 'Is there anything more sorrowful, more deserving of tears, than that the Lord's Supper should be used as a subject of strife and division'.

We don't want to do that - whilst we will highlight certain scriptural things that we feel are worthy of our acceptance, we don't want to make the Lord's Supper an issue to divide

Christians, rather it should in nature be something that unites us all. Indeed, it was said of some Christians a couple of hundred years ago that they were so particular about the matter of breaking bread, and also so careless about the matter of breaking hearts. We don't want to be like that: have our doctrine all correct, and yet our lives are in shambles. Yet Erwin T. Lutzer continues concerning Philip Melancthon, and says: 'If Melancthon were alive today, he might not weep because of controversies that surround the Lord's Supper, but he might well sorrow because of our indifference to its meaning and importance'.

That is where I want my emphasis to be these weeks. There is a great indifference concerning the importance of the Lord's Supper and its meaning, and indeed the pendulum has swung very dramatically from a great debate around the subject to an even greater disinterest about it. The second preliminary remark I want to make is that at times even we as Bible believing Christians are guilty of imposing upon the word of God our own presuppositions regarding this truth of the Lord's Supper. I believe it is vital that, as we embark upon this study, that we suspend our assumptions, our prejudices and our traditions. I think it would be helpful for all of us if we just come to the Bible with a clean sheet, and ask of the scriptures: what saith them concerning the Lord's Supper?

Now there'll not be too much controversy, I don't think, in what I have to bring to you this morning - so you can relax! I want us to answer three questions: first, why should we observe the Lord's Supper? Second, when should we observe the Lord's Supper? Thirdly, and I will only be beginning this consideration: how should we observe the Lord's Supper? I will elaborate much more on that in our next study.

Let's begin trying to answer, from the word of God, the first question: why should we observe the Lord's Supper? Now that might seem a foolish question to ask, and yet we must realise that there are those in Christendom who do not believe it is necessary to be at the Lord's Table, and to remember the Lord through the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup. The Quakers do not believe in this ordinance, the Salvation Army does not believe in this ordinance. Why should we observe - first, should we? Yes, of course we should, but why should we?

There are three qualifications, I believe, for an ordinance to be valid and practised today in the church. The first qualification is that it must be instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself - and in three of the four gospel records we have Him instituting this Supper - it must be instituted by the Lord. Secondly, it must be practised in the Acts of the Apostles - and of course several references are there to this Supper. Thirdly, not only must it be instituted by the Lord and practised in the Acts of the Apostles, but it must be explained in the Epistles. We have read this morning from 1 Corinthians 11, from what is the lengthiest most detailed explanation of the Supper of the Lord in the Epistles, though there are other brief references through them. Now the only two ordinances that possess these three qualifications - instituted by Christ Himself, practised in the Acts, and explained in the Epistles - are the ordinances of believer's baptism, and the Lord's Supper. I think right away it's clear that we ought to be practising this today, yet that does not satisfy some.

Yet, within our text this morning, there is, I believe, an indisputable verse that shows us that we must obey this command of the Lord. It is found in verse 26: 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come'. Has the Lord Jesus come again? Of course He hasn't. We are to practice this until He come, He hasn't come, so we are to keep on remembering Him in His own appointed way until He comes.

'Till he come! O let the words
Linger on the trembling chords'.

We need to remember Him till He comes: 'This is my body which was broken for you. This is the blood of the covenant of the New Testament in this cup, drink it'. These are the means by which the Lord Jesus wants us to remember Him in His bodily absence, until He comes again - whilst He is with us, of course, by His Spirit. Now can I liken the Lord's Supper to a photograph? We're not entering into the debate of transubstantiation, or for that matter consubstantiation - if you don't know what those are, it doesn't really matter - but these emblems are, if you like, a photograph of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the sense in which, if you were to go into my study there, on the desk there's a photograph of my children. If you were to wander in and say: 'Who's that?', I would say, 'Those are my children' - yet they are not my children, they are an image of my children, and yet it's quite acceptable for me to say, 'Those are my children'. The bread and the wine speak to us of the Lord Jesus, but they're like a photograph - because there's a day coming when He breaks the clouds, and we will go to be with Him, and then we'll no longer need the picture because we will have the Person.

The bread and the wine, or the bread and the cup more correctly, are tangible signs for us as physical people to remember the Lord Jesus in His absence. But this is the point: till He comes - He is coming, but we have to remember Him until He comes. That is why we should observe this Supper. So I think, personally, that the issue of whether or not the Lord's Supper and its practice today is biblical is very clear. I have to say that whether or not you believe it should be practised today does not come down to whether it is found in the Bible, it comes down to a separate issue. You see, it comes down to whether you believe that the church today should actually seek to recover the simple and the primitive nature of New Testament Christianity; or whether you fall into the camp that could be called 'the development people', who espouse the development theory - that is, namely, that ecclesiastical bodies and officials can add to Scripture, or delete from Scripture, or change, upon the authority of the church or their ordination, change the teaching of the New Testament.

So we've seen clearly that the Bible tells us that this was practised. The Lord instituted it, it was practised by the early disciples in the Acts, and it is explained in the Epistles - it's clearly biblical! Yet there are those who say: 'Well, we don't want to get back to the primitive nature of New Testament Christianity, the church has developed beyond these practices today' - that is why some don't practice it. Yet I hope that everyone here this morning is a believer that believes we should be of the first persuasion, and we should get back to the basics of early New Testament Christianity. We should get as close as we can to the primitive nature of the early apostolic Church.

Now that being established, we can clearly see that this was a practice in the New Testament. Christians gathered around the Table of the Lord, they gathered to worship the Lord by the reading of scripture, by praying, by singing hymns, by sharing with one another, by preaching, and by taking part in these emblems of Christ's Passion. We also find from 1 Corinthians 16 that there was a collection taken when the believers met for that event. Now we will look into those practicalities in a later week - but the point I want to make in answer to this question, 'Why should we observe the Supper of the Lord?', is that He has commanded it, the early Christians practised it, the Epistles commended it and explain it. Therefore, as far as Christ is concerned, the apostles are concerned, and the apostles' doctrine in the New Testament is concerned, every believer has an appointment with the Lord Jesus Christ around His Table.

Why should we observe it? Because we all have an appointment with the Lord at it! The implication of that, personally for the Lord Jesus Christ, is that He misses us when we're not there. We know from Luke chapter 7 - you can look up the verse if you wish, Luke 7 verses 45 and 46 - that when the Lord entered Simon's house, that dear woman broke the ointment upon Him and anointed Him, and He turned to Simon and He rebuked him and said, 'Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet', verse 46, 'My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment'. If the Lord Jesus Christ missed the Pharisee's kiss, and the Pharisee's anointing of His feet with fragrant oil, surely He certainly misses you when you are not around His Table to lavish love on Him that has been absent for so long.

This is the only meeting that the Lord told us to have, the only one. It's the only gathering at which the Lord has requested you be at, and yet many believers cannot bear to be there! Now I don't want to labour this point, but I have to say that there is something wrong if you don't want to be there. Having said that, often there can be something wrong with the way we practice the Lord's Supper which does not encourage people to be there - but we'll deal with that in time. What we're dealing with now is the command of the Lord: why should we observe? Because we have an appointment with Christ, is that not enough?

The second question: when should we observe this Supper? Well, it might be a surprise to you, and some of you might take issue with me on this point, but the Bible does not say how often we are to practice the Lord's Supper - it doesn't. The Lord is recorded as saying by Paul, if you look back at 1 Corinthians 11 please, in verse 26: 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup'. Now of course, at the first in the early church, we know from the Acts of the Apostles, this was practised every day - every day they broke bread! If you turn for a moment to Acts chapter 2, I think it's important we take time over these things, Acts 2 verse 46, says: 'And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart'. Now that breaking of bread was probably part of a fellowship meal that all these believers have together, it was called initially 'the love feast'. Now when we turn to Acts chapter 20, if you turn with me, we read in verse 7 that: 'Upon the first day of the week', this is in Troas, 'when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight'.

Now that verse may imply that the disciples ceased from breaking bread every day, and began the practice of breaking bread on the first day of the week - every Lord's Day. Then we come, as we have referenced, to 1 Corinthians 16, and we find that 'Upon the first day of the week every one laid by in store, as God has prospered them' - they gave financially, and of their produce. One translation, I think, accurately translates that phrase: 'On the first day of every week they laid by in store'. Now let me repeat what I said initially: the Bible does not say anywhere how often the Lord's Supper should be practised - it only says 'as often', and the apostolic practice seems to have evolved to the point where, on the first day of every week, they broke bread. Now we believe that apostolic practice is apostolic preset - because they did it, we should do it. Paul said, didn't he, in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians: 'The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord'. Because of the significance, the first day of the week being the day the Lord rose again, being the day on which the Holy Spirit came and the church was born at Pentecost, and various other reasons, it is a significant day on which to break bread. Because that was the practice of the apostles and the apostolic church, we conclude that it is to be the continuing practice of the church today.

Now, let me deal with a common objection to breaking bread every Lord's Day. People say:

'There is a great danger of overfamiliarity'. Well, of course there is a danger with overfamiliarity with any precious truth, but for that reason some churches only break bread once a month, and others do it four times a year. Now I have to say that the motivation for that is a worthy one. Those people have their hearts in the right place, they don't want to cheaply remember the Lord, and many of them have great preparation running up to those special times. Though it is a worthy motivation, I have to say it is unbiblical for the reasons we have cited - 'as often as ye', it was anticipated that it would be often, and we find it came to be every week on the first day.

Incidentally, I'm not wanting to offend anyone unnecessarily, but if you belong to a denomination or a group that does not remember the Lord every Lord's Day, you would do well to study some of the forefathers of your particular tradition. For instance, the Presbyterians, John Calvin in his Institutes of Christian Religion said that the Supper should be observed, I quote: 'Very frequently, and at least once in a week'. The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, led his people every Sunday to break bread. The great Baptist preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, wrote these words: 'Shame of the Christian Church that she should put it off once a month. They who once knew the sweetness of each Lord's Day celebrating the Lord's Supper will not be content to put it off to less frequent seasons'.

Now, let us summarise what we're saying concerning when we should observe the Lord's Supper. We cannot say it was only practised on the Lord's Day in the early church, but what we can say is that it was practised on the Lord's Day in the early church. Now please note one other thing which might be a little controversial to some - I don't see why it should be - but it seems, certainly at least to me, that this Supper was practised in the evening of the first day of the week. It was instituted by the Lord on the night in which He was betrayed. In Acts 20, in verse 7 we read about the practice in Troas - we see that Paul preached until midnight, it's unlikely therefore that the ordinance began at 10 in the morning. In verse 8 we read: 'And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together'. Now many believers in the early church were slaves, and they had no power or freedom to decide to go in the morning or the afternoon, most likely they were only at liberty to worship in the evening. The fact, of course, that this ordinance is designated the Lord's Supper would indicate that the time it is to be celebrated, or was celebrated I should say, was in the evening.

It was C. H. Spurgeon who said: 'No one ever heard of a man taking his supper before his breakfast, until men invented the idea'. I tend to agree with him. Now please don't misunderstand me: I am not saying that there is anything wrong with breaking bread in the morning, as we do - but what I saying is, don't make an unbiblical rule that says you have to do it in the morning, and you can't do it in the evening; because in all likelihood it was practised in the evening in the New Testament apostolic church. It's good that we should make that point - to see how our man-made traditions, at times, can obscure the simplicity of what was New Testament practice. We must beware of that, not doing things or propounding dogmatically things that we cannot prove from the word of God, but only from our own traditional experience. We'll see more about that, I think, in our next study.

So, how often should we observe this Supper? Frequently, at least once in the week - therefore none of us as Christians can agree with the axiom, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder'. Now maybe that's the case in your marriage, I don't know, that's another problem you'll have to deal with! But I think it's more the case that absence makes the heart wander. As far as the Lord's Table is concerned, your absence is an indication, I believe, that your heart is wandering, or has wandered away from the Lord. If you love someone, it's very

simple, you want to be with them. If you love someone, they will be often in your mind, you will think often of them - how often? As often as you can! Is that not the case? There can be no overfamiliarity when there is intimacy.

In John 14 verse 15 the Lord Jesus said: 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. Now people have done great disservice to that verse, they have interpreted it as meaning you love the Lord by obeying, and that is not what it means. You do not love the Lord by obeying in heartless judicial manner, that is not love. What it does mean is that if you do love the Lord, you will obey. Just as temperature is what moves the mercury up the thermometer, love is what moves obedience. It is love that motivates us to obey Christ's commands, and so love is the motivation, and the thermometer is our obedience of love - so remembering the Lord, if you like, is a gauge to our love to Christ; the Christ who says, 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. Would He have to say to some of us here today: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot'? The Lord's Supper is a thermometer of your love to Christ - are you cold, or are you hot?

We've seen why we should observe it, when it should be observed - thirdly and finally: how we should observe it. Now I'll deal with this in greater detail the next time we take up this subject in two Sunday mornings, but the first reason - and I'll highlight this again next time - the first reason we should obey this command, and the first way we should obey it is with a consciousness that Christ is in the midst. Let me repeat that: we should obey the observation of the Lord's Supper with a consciousness that Christ is in our midst. The hymn goes:

'Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands;
Points to the wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified'.

I think we've lost this: He and He alone is to be the central focus of our gathering. He promised in Matthew 18 and verse 20 that 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst'. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church, and He is the Head of the body which is the church. There is one Head, and there is one body, of which every one believer is a member. So we meet to Him, we gather to Him, we gather to His name.

'Gathered to Thy name, Lord Jesus,
Losing sight of all but Thee'.

You see Christ - and we must maintain this, and I believe we must rediscover this - is the gathering centre of His people, Christ and Christ alone. Now why is that so important to emphasise? Well, many people today gather to a preacher - and this is where I feel like getting out of the road permanently. No believer should gather to a preacher - that's why it grieves me and others at times when certain preachers may be in the pulpit, you clear off! Which proves that you're not gathering to the Lord, you're gathering to a preacher. Now that's a problem. Other people gather to a pastor, or a priest, or a minister, and believe that a man is the dispenser of the emblems, and even the grace of God, and even perhaps - God forbid - pardon and penance. Others gather to a denomination, and they will not gather anywhere where their particular sectarian name is not above the door, and that is a problem. Others gather to a building, and you hear even of folk in this assembly talking about 'the house of the Lord' - this is not the house of the Lord, you are the house of the Lord. You are living stones. You see, it's because we have moved away from this principle doctrine, that Christ is

the gathering centre of His people, that we have lost the edifice that is built upon it, and many of the truths that derive from it. We gather to His name, and to His person alone.

How should we observe the Lord's Supper? Here's the first answer that I want to dwell on as we close our meeting this morning: we ought to gather to that observance with a consciousness that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, by His Spirit, is in the midst. Now you might be saying: 'Is that not the case at every meeting?' - well, yes it is, we'll deal with that in a subsequent week. But we as believers are to appropriate the presence of Christ by faith, it's a thing we take to ourselves by faith. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, the word of God says: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst' - so you take that when you're round the Table and you don't feel that the Lord's there, and you can't sense He's there, and maybe the ministry and the contribution isn't helping to make you feel He's there, but it's up to you by faith to appropriate His presence.

The question really comes down to: do we believe He is there? Just think of this for a moment: imagine if the announcement was made over television or in the press, and from church pulpits around our land, that the Lord Jesus Christ will be appearing tonight at the Odyssey Arena in Belfast at 8:00pm. Imagine it, just imagine it! I don't know how many it holds - is it 7000 or more? It wouldn't hold that amount that night. Do you know what I think would happen? I think that planes right across our globe would have to put on unchartered flights to get pilgrims from all over the world to come to the Odyssey Arena in Belfast to meet with the Lord! Yet He is with us, He's with us by His Spirit. I know we find that hard because we are tangible creatures, material and physical, but that's why He's given us tangible emblems, physical, material, to help us realise that He is in the midst. Do we believe that?

I read a story this week by Vernon Schlieff in his book, 'Our Great Adventure in Faith', and he talks about his own experience in his home assembly many years ago. This is what he says: 'One Lord's Day, when Christians were gathered together to remember the Lord, my great-grandmother happened to lift up her head to glance out of the window, and was startled to see that our barn in the distance was burning, with great flames licking at the roof! She nudged her husband, my great-grandfather, and whispered excitedly in his ear, 'John, our barn is on fire'. Without so much as lifting his head, he whispered back to her, 'Hush, we're in the presence of the Lord'. Now, that does seem extreme, doesn't it? Maybe it is, but should we not admire his perception of the Lord in the midst?

How should we remember? Paul says we need to look up. This is the Lord's Supper, not the Saviour's Supper, He has been exalted and given a name which is above every name. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, and whilst we do remember His death, He's no longer on a tree - we remember Him as the Lamb, but we worship Him as the exalted Lord! Don't keep Him on the cross! Look up! The Lord's Supper! Look back: 'Remember me', He says. Look out: 'We do show forth his death' - there is a sermon in the Supper, and I believe unbelievers should be at it, not partake of it, but be at it. We are to look forward: 'Till He come', till faith gives way to sight, and the picture is removed, and the Person we see face-to-face, and we're like Him as we see Him as He is.

But not only do we need to look up, and look back, and look out, and look forward, we need to look in. Verse 28: 'Let a man or a woman examine themselves, and so let them eat'. This is profound, this has really affected me. It has affected how I broke bread this morning, I think it will affect me how I break bread from now on.

Should we break bread? Yes. When should we break bread? Often. How should we break

bread? Conscious that the Lord is in the midst. Ron Harris says we should ask ourselves: am I ready to stand before Him? Am I ready? Did you ask that this morning? Was it a rush to lick your face with a flannel, brush your teeth, and get something into your stomach to get out? Am I ready to stand before Him? When I come to the Lord's Table I should be as ready as if I was before the Judgement Seat of Christ. What did Paul say? 'If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. We need', he goes on, 'to examine ourselves and deal with any unconfessed sin before we come to His Table'. How should we remember Him? Intimately, emotionally, lovingly - this is the love feast as we remember Christ.

Can I finish with this story, Martyn Lloyd-Jones records it in his book on 'Spiritual Depression', and it talks of the days of the Covenanters in Scotland. A young girl was going to attend the Communion Service held by the Covenanters on a Sunday afternoon. Now you need to know that in those days it was forbidden by the law to have any remembrance of the Lord's Supper, other than the established church - and so the soldiers of the King of England were instructed to look everywhere for anyone who was a nonconformist in that matter and was going to partake of the Lord's Supper. Now as the girl was just about to turn a corner on her way to break bread, she came face-to-face with a band of soldiers and she knew she was trapped. For a moment she wondered what she was going to say, she didn't want to lie, and yet at the same time it would be deadly to tell the truth. Immediately upon being questioned, she found herself answering in this way - listen, this is beautiful, she said: 'My elder brother has died, and they are going to read his will this afternoon. He has done something for me, and he has left something for me, and I want to hear them read the will'. They allowed her to go on.

My elder Brother has died and they are going to read His will next Sunday morning. He has done something for you, He has left something for you - do you want to be there to hear His will?

Father, lest we forget Gethsemane, lest we forget Christ's agony, lest we forget Thy love for us, lead us to Calvary. Lord, touch hearts here this morning that aren't remembering the Lord Jesus, and help them to be with us - but more, to be with the Lord and not miss the opportunity of worshipping at His feet. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2007
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The Lord's Supper - Chapter 2

"The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper – Part 2"

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I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, you will remember that when we began this study a fortnight ago - that is 'The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper' - we took 1 Corinthians 11 for our reading, and there Paul enshrines for us what he received of the Lord, as did all the apostles, concerning the practice of the Lord's Supper and that was on the night on which He was betrayed. So he begins, as we shall see in a moment or two, a section there concerning the meeting of the church, the assembling together of God's people. He's still in that vein in chapter 14, and whilst this chapter deals with things such as the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy and so on, we'll not be touching on those, those are big issues in and of themselves, we're just looking at this passage as far as it sheds light on what the meeting of the church was like in apostolic days. That's all we are concerned with just now: what the meeting of the church was like in apostolic days.

So chapter 14, and we'll take our reading up at verse 26: *"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together", or when you assemble, "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church",* and we'll end our reading there at verse 35.

Now you may not remember that two weeks ago when we began this course, I give you two preliminary remarks. Let me just remind you of them, because I think they're necessary again today. First of all, I emphasised the fact that I believe the pendulum swing in opinion regarding the Lord's Supper has swung from being a great debate concerning how we should do it, and the errors of certain sects and denominations in their practices, to a swing to a greater disinterest in this whole subject in general. So whilst I will obviously - and it's impossible not to touch on practical issues - my objective is not to deal with errors regarding how other folk, and how indeed we ourselves might practice the Lord's Supper, but my objective is to arouse interest in believers to realise - and I emphasised this the last time, I'm not going to do it this morning - it is commanded of the Lord that you as a believer remember Him. It is commanded that you do that regularly, as often as you eat it, weekly was the apostolic practice - that is our, and ought to be our practice today - the big question is, do you do it? Have you any interest in doing it? That's my objective: to get you interested in remembering the Lord, biblically.

Then my second preliminary remark was to show that my objective was also to rediscover, from the New Testament, apostolic practice concerning the Lord's Supper - how we ought to do it. The reason why I want to emphasise that is not primarily to criticise others, but to highlight the fact that we can be as guilty as anyone of imposing our own presuppositions upon God's word, even regarding this particular issue. Therefore I think it's vital that we suspend our assumptions, prejudices, whatever traditions we might hold, and ask - with a clean sheet, if you like - 'What saith the Scriptures regarding the Lord's Supper?'

Now we have looked this morning at 1 Corinthians 14, and I believe there is no more intimate a glimpse into what first century Christianity, what the church was like when it assembled, than the picture found here particularly between verses 26 and 35. The apostle begins in verse 26: 'How is it then, brethren? when ye come together' - or it could be translated, and is, like this, 'What is the outcome, then, brethren, when you assemble?'. Another translation puts it like this: 'When you assemble together as the church'. Now I've already said to you that this phrase, 'when you assemble', is found in these chapters in particular in Corinthians, and it anticipates the coming together of believers as the church for the meeting together of the church. That's why in chapter 11, where we were in our last study, this verb occurs five times 'when you assemble together', and that of course is in the context of coming together as a church to observe the Lord's Supper.

Now here in chapter 14, verses 26 and 34, we derive several practical features of what that New Testament gathering together for the Lord's Supper was like, what their meeting was like. Now the last time, you will remember, I sought to answer three questions. One: why should we observe the Lord's Supper? Two: when should we observe the Lord's Supper? And we began in the last study looking at, thirdly, how we should observe the Lord's Supper. We want to begin where we left off: how should we observe the Lord's Supper?

Now before we embark upon that, excuse this crude illustration but I think it brings to light how important it is to understand the principles behind the practice of the Lord's Supper. In order to fly a plane - and I stand to be corrected on this, I don't know an awful lot about flying them - but I imagine that you must first study and understand the laws of aerodynamics. You've got to understand principles and laws before you fly the aircraft. It's similar with the Lord's Supper, to observe the Lord's Supper - and, I believe, operate correctly in it - there are certain principles that must be grasped first. So we want to deal with those this morning, because these principles affect how we practice the remembrance of the Lord. I have four, and I'm going to spend a bit of time on each.

The first is the one we began with the last time, I don't know whether you can remember it, I'll not test you. It was simply this, the first principle when we are around the Table and met together as the church is: we must acknowledge Christ in the midst. Christ is in the midst of His people.

'Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands;
Points to the wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified'.

He, and He alone, is the central figure of our gathering, the focus of that meeting. He said Himself in Matthew 18:20: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst'. Intrinsic within that principle there is the doctrine that Christ is the sole Head of the one body which is the church, and every believer is a member of that body - and we saw that from Ephesians 5 and verse 23. We gather together to His name and to His person:

'Gathered to Thy name, Lord Jesus,
Losing sight of all' - anyone - 'but Thee'.

He is the gathering centre of His people, now that is vitally important. That means that a preacher, whoever he is, however great his abilities may be, a preacher is never the reason for God's people to gather. Can I repeat, please, what I said the last time: it grieves me, when certain preachers are preaching, that some of you will not come. That shows that you're not gathering to the Lord, you're gathering to a preacher. Now there are some preachers, and at times we all would like to absent ourselves - name no names! But if the Lord is here, if He is the gathering centre of His people, that's what should matter. There is something that addresses one-man ministry here as well: a pastor or a minister is not to be the gathering centre of Christ's people. A denomination is not what you're to fly your flag to, you will not find denominations in the word of God - except in a negative light: 'Some say you are of Apollos, some of Cephas, some say 'I am of Christ'', it's the only thing in the Bible that is remotely like a denomination. You are not to gather to a building, and I cannot emphasise this enough: this building is not a house of God, it is not. You are the house of God. Now that doesn't mean we ought to do everything and anything in this building, it may be consecrated to do certain things in in a good sense - but there's nothing holy about bricks and mortar, but there's something is to be holy about you.

So you see how important it is that we emphasise this principle: that Christ and Christ alone is the gathering centre of His people, it is Christ in the midst that is to draw us and attract us. He is to be the fulcrum of all that we do when we are met as a church. How can we be conscious of Christ in our midst? Well, we saw that we ought to appropriate His presence by faith, take Him at His word, practice His presence, and in an act of faith believe that He is there. How seldom do we do that?

Well, let's leave that, for we have spent some time on it already, and go to our second principle - which is simply this, and in a sense it outflows from what we have already said: the second principle that relates to the practice of how we operate the Lord's Table is the priesthood of all believers, the priesthood of all believers. Now turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 2, we'll read two verses, verse 5 and verse 9. First Peter chapter 2 verse 5 reads: 'Ye also, as lively', or as living, 'stones, are built up a spiritual house'. So we're not to be people who are into physical houses, and sanctuaries and cathedrals, etc, but a spiritual house, which is the church, 'an holy priesthood', there you have it, you are a holy priesthood. This is your job as a member of the holy priesthood: 'to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ'. So you are a member of a holy priesthood that offers up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. Now verse 9: 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood', that's a different emphasis, same priesthood, different emphasis, 'an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. So not only are you a member of a holy priesthood, but you're a member of a royal priesthood. The holy priesthood offers up sacrifices of worship to God through Jesus Christ, and the royal priesthood are to go out and show forth the praises of the one who has taken them out of darkness into God's marvellous light. In other words, this holy priesthood has got to do with our worship of God through Jesus Christ. This royal priesthood in verse 9 has got to do with our witness of Jesus Christ, particularly to those who are without Him as yet.

Now we could spend the whole morning on those two aspects to the priesthood of all believers, we don't have time, but let me just say that we derive from this that the idea of one particular group of men, or for that matter women, to be priests is inherently

unscriptural. You don't find that, you find it in the Old Testament, you find it in Judaism, you find it in Catholicism, and in many other sects even of Protestantism - but you don't find it in the Bible. We are all, who have trusted Christ, we are all priests, men and women. We have all responsibility to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise to God, we have all got the responsibility to go out and gossip the Gospel - and that also affects ministers. There's no idea here of a particular class called 'clergymen', while there are many godly clergymen, godlier than I will ever be perhaps, that idea - that's what we're talking about, not persons or people - that idea is foreign to the New Testament. What we find here is that we are all the body of Christ, and we are all equal before God - and that implies that all rank that might be found out in that world from Monday to Friday, all rank is to be left outside. So if you are a professor or a doctor, or a banker or some other professional person, or if you are a person - I don't know what the technical name is - that collect the bins, I have to be careful. Whatever you are, if you sweep the streets, or clean toilets, when we come together as God's people we are equal before God, there's nobody better than anyone else. That, incidentally, also has an aspect of reference to what position you might operate in the assembly. Just because you're an elder or a deacon, doesn't mean you're any different to the rest. This cuts both ways.

One day when the Duke of Wellington was at the Communion Table, an old and extremely poor man took his place beside him. The usher was about to ask him to leave, but the Duke, sensing what was going on, grabbed the elderly gentleman's hand and whispered: 'Do not move friend, we are all equal here'. That's it! I don't know whether he was saved, the Duke of Wellington, but he got that truth right. At the Lord's Table we are all equal - and it's more than just equality of worth, this is particularly what I want you to see: it is equality in worship. All believers are priests, listen to what I'm saying now: even male and female are priests around the Lord's Table, and male and female are to offer up worship there. Sometimes you women feel, rightly or wrongly, that you're downtrodden when it comes to exposition from the pulpit - well, here's a responsibility you have, and you are to function as a priest around the Lord's Table. Now, of course, let's not take this further than the scriptures give us warrant. Of course, in verses 34 to 35, Paul prescribes, inspired of the Holy Spirit, that in this church meeting women are to be silent, and not to exercise their gifts or their worship publicly. This is to be done privately by women, but it is to be done privately!

Therefore, what is being said here related to the priesthood of all believers is that everyone who is saved, when we are meeting together as a church, particularly at the Lord's Table, we are all to be worshipping, all of us. The men have the privilege - and we haven't got time to go into why, but it's got to do with creation and the fall - they have the privilege to worship audibly, the women have the privilege and responsibility to worship silently, but we have all got to worship! Every man is free to contribute a hymn, or a prayer, or reading of scripture, a word of teaching or exhortation, and a giving of thanks - that's clear from 1 Corinthians 14, and we'll look at that in a moment or two. Have you got it now? One, the first principle that relates to the practice of how we operate the Lord's Table: Christ is in our midst, He is the gathering centre of His people. Two: the priesthood of all believers, not a select few, we're all to be there to worship.

Thirdly: there is no officiating ministry, no officiating ministry. Now what does that mean? Well, you see here in verse 26 of 1 Corinthians 14 that 'every one of you', 'every one of you hath a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation', each one has. So there was no one person officiating, no one man presiding over this gathering - this is vitally important, and I think we have lost it in these days, particularly in Protestantism. Ephesians 4, turn with me to it, the New Testament clearly tells us that the responsibility for ministry is to every believer, Ephesians 4 verses 11 and 12 - the Holy Spirit, God through the Holy Spirit,

and through the resurrection gifts of Christ: 'gave some, apostles; and some, prophets', now those are the foundation gifts of the church, 'and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers', and we have those in operation today, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Why were they given to the church, these gifts? 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry', now in your English the Authorised has a comma there at 'saints', you could read right through, 'For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry', that's the sense. These men were given to the church to perfect the saints to do the work of ministry. These were not the ministerial characters!

This is so important: every believer, therefore, is in the ministry. There's no one type of person to administer the Lord's Supper or baptism, any believer ought to be able to break the bread, pass the cup, and put someone down under the water - any believer. There is no one person with all the gifts needed to build up the body that is the church, that's why Christ never appointed one man over it all, because no one man has all the gifts - but the one body has been promised all the gifts! So all who have gifts - and all have some gifts, one sort or another - all are free to exercise them according to their priesthood before God. There are certain principles by which we have to exercise them, but the main one is found, if you go back to 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 26 at the very end, 'Let all things be done unto edifying'.

OK, Christ is the centre that we gather to, we are all as males and females to worship and offer up sacrifices of worship to God. The women do it silently, the men do it audibly. We each have different types of gifts, and therefore those who are gifted in certain ways ought to use those gifts in that gathering to edification. The use of your gift ought to only be to edify the people of God, now we'll spend a bit of time on that in a moment or two, but that's important - because everyone should go away edified. Let me repeat that: everyone should go away edified, and less and less that is happening. Sometimes it's a struggle to be edified, it's a great problem, particularly around the Table - now one way that could be addressed would be more contributions from the male species, that would vary things a great deal, wouldn't it? By the way, you don't need a spiritual gift to pray, that's not a spiritual gift. You don't need a spiritual gift to read the Scriptures, if all you're doing is reading them. You don't need a spiritual gift to raise a hymn, all men may do this, and how it would add to the meeting if all men at some time or another did. Wouldn't it?

Now another point that I need to make along this vein: if every man is able to add something to this gathering, an important point is that whatever they add - whether it's a prayer or ministry - it should be simple, and yet spiritual. Those two things are not mutually exclusive. You can be spiritual and simple at the same time - I'm not talking about simplistic ministry, I'm talking about easy to understand ministry, it's always better. Why? Because if people don't understand, they're not going to be edified. That's why many in the Corinth church weren't edified by the tongue speaking, because they didn't understand what was being said - because at times this was going on without interpreters, which was unbiblical. Look at verse 19 for a moment: 'In the church', Paul says, 'I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue'. Why? Because the goal was edification, and if people didn't understand they didn't get any good out of it. Now you don't have to speak in tongues for people not to understand what you're saying, you can speak in the King's English! People must understand.

Now another reason why it is important to be simple and spiritual is because it encourages younger men, and less experienced older men, to take part. Now let me say to the young men for a moment: don't be intimidated by, perhaps, how others pray and others speak, because I believe there's nothing more delightful to God than a few words spoken out of the

heart. Yet to the older men, and the more experienced, I would say: there needs to be more understanding, and more cultivating of the activity around the Lord's Table by some of you. You need to encourage some of these younger men, there needs to be more tolerance, more understanding - and when they get up and maybe say something that isn't exactly right, that you don't pounce on them right away. We need to remember that we all had to start off somewhere, even you. Now what I'm calling for here is more of a parental heart than a judgemental or critical one.

Let me give you an illustration, and I read this one. You imagine an athletic trainer, and he's out on the track every day, wind, hail and snow. A very experienced runner whom he is training, he stumbles at every hurdle, and he realises that he's slipping up, he has let his discipline fall, and he gets really irate with that man. Then he goes home, and his little one-year-old boy has been learning to take some steps. He goes home and the little boy comes running to greet him, and he stumbles two or three times - now does he glulder at the wee lad? Of course he doesn't, because now his heart is not one of a trainer, his heart is one of a father - that's what we need. You remember that that was the spirit of Paul and the apostles among the Thessalonians: 'We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children'. Now, that being said, we need young people that have a liberality because the atmosphere is welcoming for them to take part; and we need an older, more experienced, mature crowd who are understanding and tolerant to those younger men. I think if we had those things, because we have no officiating clergy at this church meeting, things would be a lot better.

Now we've got to move on: Christ is in our midst, the priesthood of all believers, no officiating ministry - and fourthly and finally: the presidency of the Holy Spirit. This fits into what we've already said, but it's another aspect: the presidency of the Holy Spirit. That means that the church meeting in the New Testament was superintended not by a man or even men, but by the Holy Spirit of God. Verse 26 seems to indicate that, and other verses, and while Christ is the Head of the church, the Holy Spirit is the Vicar of Christ on the earth today. No pope, no archbishop, no pastor, no minister, the Holy Spirit is Christ's Minister on the earth. In verse 30 we see a feature of this: 'If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace'. So while one man was giving a word from the Lord, and something was revealed to another man by the Holy Spirit - not by his own ingenuity, but by the Holy Spirit - in these apostolic days that man standing up was to sit down, and the other man was to get up. Now we could enter into the logistics of all that, but we haven't time to - but this is the point I want you to see: what was superintending the meeting was not a man's will over another man, but the Holy Spirit's will. That's what's important.

Now practically this means there is no set format to this particular meeting - of course there are things you can do, and things you ought not to do, but what I'm trying to say is that in general this is an open meeting. Even John Calvin admitted that the meeting of the New Testament Church was spontaneous in its features. So what we're saying is that there is no biblical structure, there's no order of service that's laid down for us in the New Testament as to how we do a church meeting, there's no liturgy - that is all we have, that the Holy Spirit superintends this, and we are to trust the Holy Spirit as to how this meeting takes place, and how He uses and exercises the gifts He has given to the people in the church to edify the church. You might have a different tradition, and that's all right, but we are talking here about what Scripture says.

Now, here's the problems, and people will freely say these: that type of open meeting, whether it was New Testament or not, it lends itself to abuse - and I agree with you. This is

the irony of the open meeting of the early church, its strength, its greatest strength is its greatest weakness. Its greatest strength, being opened to the superintendency and presidency of the Holy Spirit, is its greatest weakness - but in fact, let me rephrase that, its greatest strength is our greatest weakness. What do I mean? Well, what I mean is that the weakness, if there is any weakness, is in us. You see, this openness should create variety, but often it is characterised by monotony. You get the same men constantly ministering, sometimes along the same lines constantly, and sometimes you get men ministering who are not gifted to minister. I don't always point the finger at those men, because often it is because those who are gifted by the Holy Spirit to minister don't minister. We've got to look at this: sometimes a gift can be stifled. We have a promise in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit gives these gifts to the church, so if they're not manifesting themselves it's not because the Holy Spirit hasn't given them, but we are stifling them in some way. Maybe it's because the Holy Spirit does not have free reign in our lives or in our assemblies.

The problem of a meeting like this is often relayed as being long pauses - now I am never afraid of silences, that can be a great blessing, and is a discipline at times. However, I suspect that generally the long silences around the Lord's Table are not reflecting meditation, but a lack of spiritual exercise. That often can come from a lack of preparedness. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 11? 'Examine yourselves before you eat', and as priests, as 1 Peter 2 tells us in verse 5, we are to come with spiritual sacrifices. So we are to examine ourselves, and we are to come to offer up something to God - not just to get, but to give something. You're right, there are problems with this meeting, but the problem is not with the meeting as set down in the New Testament, the problem is with us.

You see, what we perceive as a weakness is actually another strength of this particular meeting, a strength that exposes our weaknesses. Actually, it's a good thing - and I'll tell you, there's times when I'm sitting around the Table when I don't think it's a good thing - but in the long-term it is a good thing, because this particular meeting, as it was envisaged by the Holy Spirit, can be a perfect gauge to the spiritual temperature of any church. You see it would be very easy to cover it all up, the fact that the Holy Spirit's not allowed to control a meeting, by putting man-made structures in place that make us all feel a wee bit more comfortable, and feel that we are going away with something a bit more substantial - but that would only be cosmetic, as far as my understanding of the New Testament is concerned. Yes, this type of format of a meeting that is given here, it lends itself to abuse - yes, when we abuse it, when we misuse it. It was abused in the New Testament, it was abused here, that's why Paul is writing - but is that the reason why we should reject it? Of course not, it is the very reason we should maintain it, even when it doesn't seem to be working - God knows best, and God knows it is for our best. God wants us to sit up, overseers and members, wants us to sit up and ask the question: why is it not working the way it ought to work? The problem comes when we don't ask that question.

Now, our responsibility therefore is to build according to the pattern of the New Testament, not to try and improve upon it, but strive for it and it alone. Now here are some practical issues regarding this presidency of the Holy Spirit - and let me address the men for a moment. Worship is to be Spirit-led, Spirit-led - the Holy Spirit is in control. Now whilst I'm advocating here, from your priesthood, that you are to come prepared - and that's essential to the variety of this particular gathering - there are some who come prepared and determined, that's not what we're looking for. You see, if you're truly prepared before God, you're as much prepared not to speak as you are prepared to speak. To be determined to speak, do you know what that is? That's the flesh. Indeed, we have here in chapter 14 verses 32 and 33, how spirits, the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet - God is not the

author of confusion. Men were to give way to other men when the Holy Spirit moved them, so there is balance here. The same in verse 29: 'Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge'. Now I think it follows that in the light of the Lord's Table meeting, that there shouldn't be a whole load of people speaking - and therefore you've got to be Spirit-led. The problem comes when someone has arrived determined to share, and they do not read what the Spirit is doing in the meeting.

Let me be as practical as I can: if what you have with you to offer to the Lord would detract from something that's already been said, or would distract from the main reason why we're there, keep it to yourself! If it is edifying, it might not be appropriate to that particular morning. What you can do is, and what you should do is, offer it in silence to the Lord. The problem comes when men come prepared and determined. Problems also come when you allow your emotions or your hobby horses to dictate your contribution, and that can add to an unedifying, unsatisfying atmosphere - but generally the problem is that this meeting can be so led by the flesh, and not by the Spirit.

Now I'm finished, but I want to remind you of the church I left with you on Monday night - Sardis. You have a name that you live and are dead, and this was the Christ with the seven Spirits who was telling them, the Christ who had all power to give them everything they needed through the perfect and complete work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The reason why their church was not administered by the Spirit was that their lives were not filled with the Spirit. Now listen: if there's a problem with the meeting of the church here in Iron Hall, the problem is with you, the problem is with me. Our practice can have a name, but it can be dead.

In Texas there was a school burnt down before the war, killing 263 children. After the war they built a new school, and they installed within it the finest sprinkler system in existence, and they even brought tours to the school to show people around the mastery of its technology. After seven years of post-war boom, they decided to expand the school again. They found that the sprinkler system had never been connected to the source - they had it, but they weren't using it. We can have a form of godliness, but deny the power - and the form without the power is useless.

Let's get the form right, but let's have the power operating. Now we're going to dispense with our final hymn for the sake of time, but let me say to you that I have another message on this - and I'll give it to you next week if I feel I can, if I feel it's appropriate for me to give, and I feel you would be able to receive it. If you've any questions regarding anything I've mentioned thus far, I'll try and answer those as well if we have time. I think this is vitally important, and do pray for my guidance, whether I should give it or not next Lord's Day morning.

There we leave it, let us pray: Father, whenever we gather as the church, we want to always be conscious that the Lord Jesus is with us. May we operate as priests, male and female, before You. May the men rise to their public responsibility, according to whatever gifts the Holy Spirit has given them. May we all be aware of the presidency and superintendency of the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Holy Spirit of the Living God. May each of us be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit, and it will make such a difference to this church and to all our lives. To the glory of Christ we pray, Amen.

The Lord's Supper - Chapter 3

"The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper – Part 3"

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Luke 22, and we begin to read our portion at verse 14: *"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you".* Now please note in passing, and I'm not going to comment too much on this, it was the Passover that the Lord Jesus sat down to celebrate with His disciples, the apostles. We have here in this portion a mention of two cups - that often confuses people - but the fact of the matter is, in the Passover feast there were four cups. Now it is the second cup mentioned that He consecrates as the cup of the new covenant, verse 20, but that answers the question, 'What's the other cup?'

Verse 21: *"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations",* my trials. *"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough".*

'The Practice and Principles of the Lord's Supper'. Hopefully over these weeks, having suspended all presuppositions and traditions regarding the principles and practice of the Lord's Supper, we have achieved some kind of biblical consensus concerning what the

apostolic practice of the breaking of bread was. Let me just remind you of what we have established up to this point. We asked the question in our first study: why should we practice the Lord's Supper? Three answers were given: it was first instituted by Christ Himself; second, it was practised in the Acts of the Apostles; and third, it was explained in the Epistles - therefore it is clearly a church practice. The second question we asked was: when should we celebrate the Lord's Supper? The answer that came back was: often. It's not stipulated exactly, in fact they broke bread from house to house every day - in the beginning it was a love feast, it was a kind of family meal with God's people. Eventually it evolved under apostolic direction to, it would seem, a weekly practice on the first day of the week. We derived from that that what was apostolic practice must become modern day principle for the Church of Jesus Christ. It was probably also practised, we saw, in the evening.

The third question was: how should we practice the Lord's Supper? We saw several things: we ought to look up, it is the Lord's Supper, He is no longer on a cross or in a tomb, but He is enthroned in heaven, He is the Lord. We are to look back, we are to remember Him in His life and ministry here on the earth, and in His death. We are to look out, we are to show forth His death till He come. There is a sermon in the Supper, even for unbelievers - while they do not partake of it, there is something that they can view in it. We are to look forward, it is 'Till He come' - and we are, in preparation of eating and drinking of it, to look in, to examine ourselves lest we eat or drink damnation unto ourselves.

Now we saw in our second study, that being last Sunday morning, certain principles that affect how we practice the Lord's Supper. The first was: we are to remember that Christ is in the midst. 'Where two or three are gathered together', He said, 'There am I in the midst of them'. So the Lord Jesus, alone, is the gathering centre of His people. We appropriate His presence by faith as we consider His promise that He will be there with us. The second principle that affects our practice is the priesthood of all believers, 1 Peter 2 - and therefore all, male and female in Christ, are priests, and we are to worship as such. Of course, there was the prohibition of the sisters of speaking publicly in the church that we saw in 1 Corinthians 14, yet before God we are all equal as priests to worship in spirit, and offer up spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. Therefore a priesthood is not reserved for a particular type of person, but is for all believers.

The third principle was: there is to be no officiating ministry. Ephesians 4 verse 12 tells us that there were certain gifted men given to the church who were there to equip the saints for the works of ministry. So the ministry, as a term, is for every believer - and we saw in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 26 that each one had something to contribute, although too many were doing it of course, and that is an ironic statement...yet we see that more than one person at least was involved in the early church gathering. All the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to men are to be used, scripturally, and to the edification of the saints in the local assembly. Though, because we believe in the priesthood of all believers, and though we do not as such believe in the exercise of a one-man ministry alone, we ought not to make the mistake of thinking that 'no one-man ministry' means 'every man or any man ministry'. I fear that I may have been misunderstood in some of what I have said over the last couple of weeks. We highlighted the fact last week that you don't need a gift to pray to God in a worship service, you don't need a gift to read scripture, you don't need a gift to raise a hymn - but you do need a Holy Spirit given gift to minister the word of God, that is not for everyone, or indeed anyone. If you are not gifted in that regard, you should keep silent - but if you are gifted, and you feel God has gifted you, you should exercise that gift; and it is the overseeing brothers who should really order that gift in a sense, and regulate it as such.

We see this in Acts 13, if you turn with me to it just for a moment to highlight this, Acts 13 please. We get a glimpse into the early church of Antioch, and in verse 1 we read: 'Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul'. So there we have several men who were recognized by the Holy Spirit, and also by that assembly, as being prophets and teachers - several in the one place. We see later on, just as an aside, in chapter 15 of Acts and verse 32 that 'Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them' - that was in Antioch. So there were these already there who were recognized in chapter 13 verse 1, and then later in chapter 15 verse 32, Judas and Silas come along, and because they are gifted of the Holy Spirit and ordained of Him alone, they are allowed to exercise their gift in Antioch. So although we are saying there is no officiating ministry, we are not saying that everyone should get up and minister God's word - far from it - but those who are gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Then fourthly we saw our fourth principle, after Christ being in the midst, the priesthood of all believers, no officiating ministry, what is vital is the presidency of the Holy Spirit. We looked in detail at this in 1 Corinthians 14. So what we have really in the record of how the early church operated is what we would know as an open meeting. There was no set order. Now we touched upon the fact that many have accused such a gathering of lending itself to abuse, and we agreed with that - but we said last week that that is actually what would seem to be an apparent weakness, but it is actually a strength, because this open meeting shows whether or not the Holy Spirit is allowed His sway in the church. It demonstrates very graphically to us whether men who have been gifted by Him are exercising their gift, or whether or not for one reason or another that gift is stifled. It also shows us how the assembly, generally speaking, is exercised by His ministry. So it's so important to maintain this, the presidency of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-32 we get a unique glimpse of how the church met at that time. In verse 26, you remember Paul started by these words: 'What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble', and the phrase 'when you assemble' is repeated over and over again in that portion between 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 14. It's anticipating the coming together of the church for its meeting, the verb is used five times at least in chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians in the context of them coming together to observe the Lord's Supper.

So if you want to be taken back, like in a time machine, to the early church and get a first-hand glimpse of what the church's meeting was like then, you have that there in 1 Corinthians 14 verses 26 through to 34. The practice of the New Testament Church, here it was: Christians gathered together around the Table of the Lord to worship the Lord by the reading of scripture, by praying, by singing hymns, by sharing preaching, by taking part of the emblems of Christ's passion in the bread and in the cup - and also 1 Corinthians 16 shows us that there was also a collection, probably, at that weekly gathering.

So I want you to imagine this: a gathering that the Holy Spirit convenes, He is the chairman. He has gifted and ordained those who should minister - not a denomination, not an organisation or an institution, but the Holy Spirit. Not every man is doing it, but those whom the Holy Spirit has appointed and gifted and given something to share. The singing comes inspired, in a secondary sense, by the Holy Spirit. This is quite a unique gathering.

Now someone at the door last week and asked me a question which inspired me further to share this with you this morning, and the question was this: should not all our services, therefore, be like that? If this was the gathering of the early church, should not all our gatherings be like this? Now the answer I'm going to give to that might well tie together a lot

of loose ends that have been in some people's minds regarding this, and indeed it might prevent misunderstanding concerning what I'm going to say in this message. Let me explain to you: in 1 Corinthians 11 through to 14 we have the biblical meeting of the church, and it is the only record that we have in scripture of the meeting of the church, met together as the church. Now that's very important: it's the only record of the meeting of the church met together as the church. In other words, Christians met together at different times for other things, but this is the way the church officially, if you like, met together on the Lord's Day.

Now, of course, some will think automatically of Acts 2:41-42, let me read those verses to you: 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers'. People will say, 'Well, there's four activities, including the breaking of bread, that the early church did'. Now here's one of our problems: we have separated those things, we have made them four things. No doubt, of course, there were instances when these things were practised individually in the early church - but when they were, they were not the meeting together of the church as the church that we have here in 1 Corinthians 14. Therefore, some believe, and I would include myself among their number, that when the early church met as the church they did all these things at the one time. What you have in Acts 2:42: 'They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' - these happened, I believe, at the one and the same gathering.

Now, does that mean that everything else that Christians do today, and have done through history, is wrong? Of course it does not, because assemblies can organise outreaches such as this one this morning, the Family Service, or this afternoon, Sunday School, the Gospel Meeting this evening, a Bible Study that we have on a Monday evening - there's nothing wrong with these things, they are not unbiblical, but they are non-biblical in the sense that you'll not find these prescribed as individual meetings in the New Testament. That doesn't make them wrong, but what we do have that is biblical is this practice of 1 Corinthians 11 through to 14 - it is the gathering of the church as the church around the Lord's Table. So it couldn't be said that any of these other gatherings, whatever they may be, constitute the church meeting as the church as we see it in 1 Corinthians 14. Now, am I splitting hairs? Well, you might think so, but I don't think so, because I believe the Lord's Supper has come to be secondary to these other things. There's where the problem is: it was never secondary in the New Testament, it was primary, in fact it was unique - it's the only thing we find mentioned! Not that they didn't do other things, or we shouldn't do other things, but surely we ought to get things in the right order?

Maybe some of the problem regarding how churches at times, even our own, convene the Lord's Supper is that we have robbed the original church meeting of several of the features that were in it, because we tend to do these things at other times. For instance, I am grieved, particularly over the last couple of weeks - I don't want to sound negative, but sometimes we only pray when we're going to break the bread and drink the cup. I don't know whether you've noticed that, but over the last couple of weeks prayer has hardly been made until that point. We must make sure that what we are doing is biblical, not just in how we do it, but in the variety that is involved in our doing of it. In all likelihood, in the early church they did everything at the one time, and therefore there was great variety in that meeting - the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Perhaps some of the monotony - it's only a suggestion - of our practice from time to time is due to a departure in this area?

Now here's a lesson, even if it be a secondary one - I believe, anyway: any departure from

apostolic pattern will eventually prove detrimental. If you want to remember that, just remember two words: departure and detrimental. Any departure from apostolic pattern will eventually prove to be detrimental. Now, when handling the Scriptures our objective must never be to improve upon the way we do things, let's suspend that right away in our minds. We should be asking: how would the Spirit have us do things? I think it's exemplified here in the apostles' doctrine, and I'll give you the facts as I believe the Holy Spirit has given them to us in the New Testament, and it's up to you what you do with them.

As is always the case - and although I have said in caveat at the beginning of this series, it has not been my aim to critique errors regarding how others practice the Lord's Table - it is the case that man-made traditions have marred the Spirit's pattern that we find in 1 Corinthians 14 in particular, and has quenched the Spirit's power in His church. I would have to say that even among those who would seek to practice what we call an open meeting, in similarity to 1 Corinthians 14, there are certain do's and don'ts that have evolved that are equal to man-made traditions and rules. I have heard these myself. I have heard some say there should be no Bible exposition around the Lord's Table - you should just sing, pray, and praise God. We'll deal with that one in a moment. Others say Bible ministry should be, if it occurs, devotional not doctrinal. Now, I think it's unfortunate that those two terms, devotional and doctrinal, have come to be seen as mutually exclusive - in other words, that you can't have the two together. I think they're complimentary. I think all ministry should be, to an extent, devotional. It should not be coldly doctrinal, yet at the same time ministry should not bypass the head on the way to the heart. Doctrine and devotion should go together.

Others say that you should only focus on the cross. Can I say very clearly that there is something wrong if, when we are around the Lord's Table, we don't remember Him in His death. There are some Suppers that almost pass without that. But is that all we are committed to remember concerning the Lord? Others say that at a certain time, certain things should be done - this should happen then - I question that. Others say hymns should be sung from a certain book. Now, please don't misunderstand anything that I'm saying: I love the Believer's Hymn Book, I use it devotionally at home as well as round the Table - but the New Testament believers didn't have a book. We should not bind ourselves to any book - it's the Holy Spirit, He cannot be bound, and we should only be bound by that which He has bound Himself to, which is the New Testament.

Now, all of these things - we don't have time to deal with them individually, but hopefully the things I'll share with you will touch upon many of them, if not all of them. But the ultimate truth that I want us to get to is: we have all got to come to the point of submitting to the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Church, that is what 1 Corinthians 11 through to 14 has got to do with. The Holy Spirit is superintending His assembly, He is representing Christ, and ministering Christ, and feeding Christ to the saints - therefore we must do it the way He would have us do it.

So let us answer this question: how does the Holy Spirit manifest His ministry at the Lord's Supper recorded in the Scriptures? It was J. H. Lang, the Bible teacher, who said these words: 'If the average modern Christian could find himself in a meeting of the early church, he might wonder where he had strayed'. Do you think that is the case? Let's see what the Scriptures teach, and see if it fits our mould in our minds or in practice - and if it doesn't, well then we have some thinking to do.

In Acts chapter 20 and verse 7, remember we looked at these words, I think it was last week, we read there: 'Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break

bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight'. Now it was clear that long hours were occupied with the Lord's Supper here in Troas, but it's also clear that long hours of instruction are implied in this verse. Now I just offer the question to you: whilst we must get to Calvary, and think on Calvary, would this suggest that at this meeting of the early church all they did was minister on Calvary? You can answer that.

We need to remember that the Passover was the foundation for this Lord's Supper feast, it was the forerunner, and there was instruction at the Passover. Exodus chapter 12, let me remind you of these verses, verse 26: 'It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped'. Now the implication of what Moses shares there in the institution of the Passover is that without that instruction going from one generation to another, this feast of the Passover would become meaningless. Indeed, it would become mere religious formality. So, God ordained that there should be instruction at the feast of the Passover. It is my conviction, it may well be only mine, that one of the reasons that Lord's Table suffers from time to time is a lack of instruction at it, about it. I'll leave that with you. Was instruction a common feature of the Lord's Supper as it was of the Passover? I believe it was.

Turn to our reading in Luke 22, till I highlight this for you - this was the night on which the institution was given by the Lord, and on that night - mark, please - He gave instruction, and notice the vast instruction that He gave. In verses 16 and 18, glance down at it, He spoke to His apostles of how that feast looked forward to another feast when He would renew fellowship with them in the Kingdom of God. In verses 24 to 27, He spoke of the fact that in His Kingdom a humble slave will be as a ruler. On from that in verses 28 to 30, He spoke that rewards and rule in His Kingdom would be gained by sharing in His present suffering and trials. In verse 31 He speaks of the activity of the accuser, Satan, the tempter, against His own disciples - particularly Peter. Then also in verse 32 He speaks that through His own intercession, that attack of Satan and that testing could be limited. In other words, He's talking about His High Priestly ministry - and of course the epistle of Hebrews elaborates on that great truth. Verses 34 to 38, look at it, He encloses a warning that that night would test their faith to such an extent that they never had before, and they would be overwhelmed, and they would be cast on their own resources, and they would fail. Do you think Luke's record is not there to impress upon us the need for instruction? And that instruction took place where? At the Table of the Lord.

Now, what about the body of teaching that we find in John? Turn to John 13, to what is commonly known as the Upper Room Ministry, John 13 through to 16. The Holy Spirit lays down for us a record as to what the Lord spoke at the Lord's Supper. Now first of all in verse 8 of chapter 13, the Lord teaches the disciples that a clean walk, washed feet, is indispensable to fellowship of Christ - what a lesson! Then secondly, if you look at verses 14 to 17 of the same chapter, He speaks that lowliness of heart is essential in disciples, that they should serve one another. Thirdly, in chapter 14 this time, verse 1 and verse 27, He speaks of how we need an untroubled heart - and it is possible by faith in the Lord and in God. We can share in His own joy and His own peace, the same is found in chapter 15 and verse 11. Fourthly, He teaches in this Upper Room Ministry of the life of abiding oneness with Christ, and fruitfulness results from great fellowship with the Godhead. In chapter 15 we see that, right through to verse 16 from verse 1. Also in chapter 14 verse 20, also chapter 15 and chapter 16, He introduces us to the person and the work of the Holy Spirit as the Teacher, the Sanctifier, and

the co-witness with every believer in Christ. Sixthly, in chapter 14 verses 13 and 14, we are told of the limitless resources and irresistible energy of prayer in faith and in the name of Christ. Finally in chapter 14, of course, the Lord Jesus introduces us to His own return, which is the hope and goal of the faith of every believer in Jesus Christ.

Now what was He doing in John 13 to 16? He was preparing His apostles for the task and the ordeals that awaited them without the support of His visible presence. He was going away from them, He would send another Comforter, and then He would come again. Now we are presently in that moment of absence concerning the King, that is, the Lord is not visibly with us - though He is there by His Spirit where two or three are gathered. They needed such ministry, and that ministry was received by them at the Table of the Lord, that's where they got it. It's interesting, isn't it? Some say we meet only to break bread and remember the Lord in His death. Yes, we are to meet to do that, and do that we must - but there ought to be much more going on in the meeting of the church. In the early church, remember please, this was their main meeting, and this was the place for the Lord to speak!

Now I know we segregate things, and I don't want to be misunderstood in what I'm saying. I'm not criticising how we remember the Lord, but all I'm saying to you is: when the early church met together as the church, they met together to break bread - but they also met together to receive ministry from the Holy Spirit from the word of God! The Lord, please note, didn't say: 'Convene the meeting of the early church to remember Me', He didn't say that. He said: 'Do this in remembrance of Me', and what was 'this'? Breaking the bread and drinking the cup. That wasn't the meeting, that was the act. Now please don't misunderstand me - what am I saying? Are we to remember the Lord in His death? Yes, a thousand times, yes! Is it only in His death? No! Now something is wrong, terribly wrong, if we do not remember the Lord in His death around the Table, and this is a serious problem. Yet the way we ought to address that problem is not prohibiting any ministry that deviates from the cross. Listen to me: in the early church, forget about what we do now, in the early church ministry was always to be Christ-centred - but to limit all ministry just to one aspect of the Lord's life, even though it be the great aspect, is unhelpful.

You see, the spiritual condition of the apostles was the Lord's theme in Luke 22, wasn't it? Incidentally, the spiritual condition of the Corinthians was Paul's theme in 1 Corinthians 11. In fact, Paul said things were so bad with their personal spiritual condition that they couldn't even eat the Lord's Supper. It was through his ministry that they were warned not to eat and drink damnation upon themselves, and it was from his ministry that they were healed in order to do it one day again. Now let's sum up what I'm saying: if we don't get to Calvary around the Lord's Table, there is something wrong - but the Holy Spirit would minister all the virtues and all the glories of Christ when we meet together as the church. He would instruct us, as Christ did, concerning life in Christ. He would fit our lives for witness of Him in the world around. Therefore, Christ-centred ministry of the word is central to this gathering of the early church, and ought to be central to ours.

Indeed, just in the Tabernacle, which is a type of the real, just as the Laver of water came before the Table of Shewbread in the tent, in the Tabernacle; I believe God's order is the ministry of the Word before we approach to eat the feast. The Word is the water that washes us, that cleanses us, that fits us. Now why am I talking this way? Because I feel that even in our own practice at times the Word of God has been given second place. That can be demonstrated in the standard of ministry that often is given - not always. It can be demonstrated in the lack of ministry that isn't given. Is it not a sign of our weakness when the Word of God comes second place, say, to singing? Don't misconstrue what I'm saying, I love

singing, and some of you know that - but when the Lord, and when the apostles had concluded the feast here in the scriptures, before leaving the Upper Room it says they sang a hymn. It was probably the Hallel, Psalm 118, it may well have been that whole section of Psalms - but notice they only sang once. Now don't take a law out of that, that's not what I'm wanting you to do, far from it - but there's a great difference between that and perhaps our practice of singing five or even six hymns in an hour! Yet the whole meeting in Troas, in Acts 20 verse 7, was spent in instruction. I wonder at times what we'd do without our hymnbook! We couldn't survive, perhaps, that whole hour without it - and yet it would seem, at times, that we could survive the hour without our Bibles.

The Epistles contain only two brief references to singing among Christians - I don't despise it, but please do note what God's word has to say about it. Ephesians 5:19, particularly Colossians 3:16, listen: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord'. The exercise of singing was not self-pleasing, the exercise was not even for worship - did you note that? What was the singing for? It was a form of, I quote Paul: 'Teaching and admonishing one another'. The Lord, of course, receives His portion of the song, but it's the part of the heart - nothing to do with the mouth or the din!

Now, let me conclude: I have given you this morning what the scriptures say, nothing more I hope, and nothing less. How do we implement these principles in our practice? Well, that's for another day perhaps - but to summarise what we find in the scriptures: in all likelihood there was only one official meeting when the church was gathered together as the church. It was the meeting at which they remembered the Lord in His death, but it was the meeting at which the Holy Spirit who had gifted men in the church ministered to the church in all of the orb of need that He alone could see was in that church. We don't limit Him as we remember the Lord in His death, why should we limit the Holy Spirit in any other facet or sphere of our existence? His gifts were given to men to minister to the needs that only He could see - 1 Corinthians 14 verse 3 says that he that prophesies with one of these gifts does it unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort. Now that was the meeting at which the early church broke bread, but something more than that was going on.

My plea is that the Holy Spirit - now this is idealistic to some people, they'll just disregard this and say this is not practical in our modern day and age - but my plea to you is that we must give the Holy Spirit full sway in our assembly, and in all our assemblies. Do you know what we have here in 1 Corinthians 14? It is the characteristics of revival that has been seen all the world over, across all sorts of strains and denominations of Christianity - because you read the accounts: when the Holy Spirit took control, it wasn't men who were in control. Men became the instruments, but the Holy Spirit did His work. Let us not bind Him, let us not hinder Him even by our own traditions, let us do whatever we must - if it mean moving mountains - that He might have freedom to minister amongst us all as God would will. May God bless His word to our hearts.

Let us all pray together: Father, none of us has a monopoly of knowledge or truth, but You have promised through Your Son, the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. We are not seeking these things out so that we can say, 'We've got it right and others have got it wrong', it's not about that, Lord. You know our hearts, it's all about getting back to the primitive nature of the early church, where the Holy Spirit was in control. The Acts of the Apostles could be called, we know, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, for You were turning the world upside down through Your ministry in ordinary, ignorant men. We know that revival has taken place, even this year, in places across our world - and the same pattern is being repeated:

God is in control. Oh Lord, we would have that again. Oh Lord, we would be used, but set us aside if that be Your will, that no flesh should glory in Your sight, but that the Lord Jesus should be lifted up, and the Holy Spirit should minister and testify of Him. God, grant it, when we are gathered, that we will get such a vision of all the glories of Christ, and the wonder of Calvary, and the wonder of His risen power, that we will be totally overwhelmed by His living presence with us. We thank You for this morning's remembrance, we thank You for the blessing that it was, but Lord we must say: more about Jesus would we know; oh, more, more about Jesus; show us more about Jesus. Lord, may these sentiments be taken in the spirit in which they were intended. May they not confuse, may they seek to bring us all to a clearer resemblance of the church as it was, and as it can be in our day and generation. We ask these things for the glory alone of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - December 2007
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Appendix A

"Celebrating The Supper Of The Lord"

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Our reading is beginning at verse 17. We were looking at the subject of headship and headcovering last week, and of course Paul has now entered into a new section of this epistle, beginning at verse 2 of chapter 11, with the church's worship and the orders and ordinances of that worship. We begin our reading at verse 17, and the title of our study tonight is 'Celebrating The Supper Of The Lord'.

"Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not", you remember in verse 2 he said 'Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances', the traditions, the teachings, 'as I delivered them to you'. So with regards to headship and headcovering he was able to praise them because they were following his instruction, his apostolic authority and teaching - but now as he comes to this issue of the Lord's Supper, he cannot praise them. *"I praise you not that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse".* The insinuation is there that they were better not coming together at all, because when they come together they do not adhere to the teaching that he gave them when he was with them.

"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you". So the two reasons why he was not pleased as they came together to break bread was that there were divisions and heresies among them. *"When ye come together",* verse 20, *"therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper"* - you think you're coming together to eat the Lord's Supper, but that's not why you're coming together at all, it's really to fulfil your own fleshly lusts and sensualities. Verse 21: *"For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. 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: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. 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. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 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. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation",* or judgement, *"to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation",* or unto judgement. *"And the rest will I set in order when I come".*

Both by instruction and by example, the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry laid down two ordinances that His disciples who were faithful were to obey and follow Him in. Both by

teaching and instruction He taught us to be baptised, He taught us to break bread and drink from the cup - but He also practised these things Himself, and by example we see Him exhorting us to do the same. He was baptised Himself, not because He had any sin but in identification with us for whom He would die He was baptised, and we ought to obey His teaching and obey His example. But also tonight we're looking specifically at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. As we come to Paul's teaching we also find echoed throughout the New Testament other apostles teaching with regards to the Lord's Table. Luke tells us that four marks of the life in the early Christian church were in Acts chapter 2, if you turn with me to it you will see this very clearly in verse 42, the practices that they had - Acts 2:42: 'And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine', that's the teaching, 'and fellowship', being together one with the other in love, 'and in breaking of bread', that's the Lord's Supper, 'and in prayers'.

So right from the very institution and beginning of the church of Jesus Christ after Pentecost, it was their practice to break bread. Many scholars and historians believe that the early church broke bread in their households and celebrated it perhaps after every meal that they ate as a family and as the church of Jesus Christ, because we know that they all lived together and had all things together, sharing of one accord. But of course as we go through the Acts of the apostles and come to chapter 20 we find that it's indicated to us that what was a regular occurrence of breaking bread and drinking of the cup became less regular in the sense that it began to be on the first day of each week. If you turn to Acts chapter 20, you find there that Paul is travelling to Jerusalem, and as he travels to Jerusalem we find in verse 6 that he stops in a town called Troas: 'And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days'. They came to Troas in five days time, but they stayed there a whole week - seven days. Paul marks in verse 7 that 'upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight'. So we see that Paul obviously didn't break bread every day that he was in Troas, but when he arrived in Troas he waited for seven days until the first day of the week which was the instigated day that the believers met in this fashion to break bread, and we see that that is continued right through the church history, and that's why we meet around the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day.

What we often do not see in the Scriptures, and of course in the way that we have interpreted the Lord's Table today as the contemporary Western church is that this breaking of bread and drinking of the cup incorporated more than just an ordinance. We find that the early church developed the Breaking of Bread into what we might call a special fellowship meal that they began to call 'The Love Feast'. Now let me show you why this is the case, if you turn to Jude - only one chapter in Jude of course - before the book of Revelation, Jude and verse 12. We see that Jude is warning against apostates and false teachers, and in verse 12 he speaks of how they infiltrate the church of Jesus Christ, and there is a danger: 'These are spots in your feasts of charity', or feasts of love, 'when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water', and so on, all the descriptions that Peter also echoes. But he mentions this title 'Your feast of charity, your love feast' - and this was a meal, if you like, like a modern day family buffet that we might have even in the church, where the believers came together on a pseudo-social, spiritual basis - to meet together, to eat together, to fellowship together - members of the church family gathering. They would bring whatever food they could, whatever drink they could afford, and they encouraged each other by sharing this food amongst them all - and regardless of how rich you were, or how poor you were, you all got the same helping and you all could partake of the same food and the same drink.

Now this was a regular occurrence in the church of Jesus Christ, probably on the Lord's Day - but such congregational meals were stressing, very clearly, fellowship, affection, mutual caring among the believers; the emphasis of their unity together lead towards the unity that they had in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and before the end of those love feasts and fellowship meals they would silence themselves quietly and come together and remember the Lord Jesus Christ in the breaking of bread and the drinking from the cup. They would celebrate the unifying accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Now, it is likely, in fact almost definite, that the Corinthians followed this same custom - but what they had done was, they had laid into the Lord's Supper with a sentiment not of love, not of fellowship, not of worship and remembrance unto the Lord, but in the spirit of a gluttonous orgy of pride and of selfishness.

Now this was common, a common happening in the early church among those churches where false teachers had infiltrated. If you turn with me to 2 Peter, I want to show you this, 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 13, speaking of brute beasts, apostate teachers that will utterly perish in their own corruption, he says: 'They shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children'. Now this is exactly what was happening in the church at Corinth: they were beginning from their love feasts, leading into the Lord's Supper, to revel in a drunken gluttonous orgy in the very sight of God - and it's small wonder that the apostle Paul refused to praise them in what they were doing around the Lord's Table.

Now let's look first of all at their perversion of the supper, verses 17 to 22, as we see in these verses the disorder that was causing chaos within the church. Let me give you an example - verse 21: 'For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken'. The rich would come, and they were supposed, in a feast of love and a feast of fellowship, to share their food with those who were poor in the church - but they didn't regard them at all! In fact, they sat up to their big three course slap-up dinner, with all the drink that they could get, and they ignored those who were poor within the assembly - and because of that some went hungry. Then there were the sensual in the assembly, they weren't too preoccupied with the food, but rather with the drink - they had no regard to sobriety at all, and they made themselves drunk! So, what began as a love family feast of the church of Jesus Christ, which initially would lead into the Lord's Table to break the bread and drink from the cup, became a debauched disgraceful orgy of sensuality and of sin.

For that reason Paul could not praise them, in fact this was a far cry from any fitting prelude or preparation for the Lord's Supper at all. It was totally foreign and opposite, the antithesis of everything that is of love, whether to man or to God. Paul gives us two specific reasons why he was not pleased with the goings-on here in these love feasts - verse 18: 'For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it'. Now he didn't know this first-hand, he obviously had heard it, but he could believe it because he knew - and we have found out in these past weeks what the Corinthians were like, puffed up with pride and they had the party spirit: 'I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos, and I am of Christ'. Paul says: 'I partly believe these divisions', and the word is 'schismata' in Greek, it's the word we get 'schism' from in our English language - a division, it literally means a tearing apart or a cutting in half, and metaphorically it speaks of division and dissension within the church.

Now this was a far cry from what the embryo of the church was in the Acts of the apostles - this is what I want you to see: how far away in so short a time they had removed from the Holy Spirit's ideal. From the Acts of the Apostles we know that as the church lived and worshipped together, it says they had all things in common, sharing with all as anyone might have need. But the Corinthian upper-class disdained not only sharing their food, but even sharing the same room, as it were, the same meal, with those who were less fortunate brothers and sisters in Christ. It caused the division within the church, schismata. What I want you to see first of all is that this is a mark of wrong living - now remember that: this is a mark of wrong living. They did not behave in brotherly and sisterly love toward their fellow Christians.

But here's the second thing that Paul cites against them in verse 19: 'For there must be also heresies among you', there were heresies among them, 'that they which are approved may be made manifest among you'. Now that word 'heresy' in the Authorised Version isn't the same meaning as we would have today about heresy, a false doctrine. What it means literally in the Greek is 'false thinking', the false thinking that had led them to their divisions: to think that the upper-crust were a cut above the rest, those who were poor and didn't have the same food and drink as the rest of them. It was the idea, the psychological thinking process, that led them to their divisions. Now the remarkable thing about these heresies, this wrong thinking, was that Paul says: 'they which are approved, these must be like this' - verse 19: 'there must be heresies, that they which are approved may be manifest among you'.

This is very strange, because when you read the corrective epistles of Paul you find that he is so hard on wrong thinking and especially false doctrine, our definition of heresy today, so it seems strange that Paul would say on the other hand: 'there must be false thinking among you'. Now that phrase 'there must be' in English is only one word in Greek 'dei', it's found throughout the New Testament and it simply means: 'it is necessary'. So you could translate this: 'It is necessary that there be these heresies and false thinkings among you, it must be'. It denotes, in the sense of the Greek word, 'necessity, compulsion, it has to be like this'. When Peter and the apostles, if you remember in the Acts of the Apostles, were told by the Sanhedrin to stop preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or they would suffer persecution for it, they replied, Peter and the apostles to the powers that be: 'We must obey God rather than men'. Now the 'we must' is the same word - 'dei' in the Greek - 'we must', it's not an option, this must be for us, it's a compulsion, it's a necessity. We find the Lord Jesus used the same word in relation to many prophetic events including His crucifixion, His resurrection, things that must happen - Matthew 24, Matthew 26, John 3. He even went as far as to say: 'For it is inevitable that stumbling-blocks must come, but woe unto that man through whom the stumbling-block comes' - 'it is inevitable' is that word in Greek 'dei', it must be, it's a necessity. Paul is now using the same Greek word for these heresies, it is a necessity, it is inevitable, it must be that these false thinkers are among you - why must that be? He tells us: 'It's inevitable, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you'.

Let's really try and understand this - what does the word 'approved' mean? Well, it means passing a test, literally that's the picture language that's given here. It used to be used of precious metals that had been tried in the fire and proved to be pure, and what Paul is saying here is that there has to be certain amounts of church division, there has to be! It is inevitable that there will be where the ungodly and the sinful will separate from those who are following Christ and His teaching and trying to live holy lives and spiritual existence - and because of that, by doing this Christ proves His faithful saints, His remnant of those who believe in Him, and who trust in Him and follow His word. Now this puts the myth to what we

hear in ecumenism today, that in some way Christ's prayer in John chapter 17 has never been fulfilled, that His children should be one as He and the Father are one. We often hear this: 'We've got to fulfil this prayer' - well, I believe that if Christ prayed a prayer like that, that the Father would answer Christ's prayer, and has answered Christ's prayer, and His church is one in spirit. It is the same spirit right throughout the whole church, but is this a contradiction of what the Lord said in John chapter 17? Of course it is not: the Lord is speaking in a spiritual sense, and praying that they will be united in truth, 'For Thy word is truth', He said in John 17 - but what is being said by the inspiration of the Spirit here is that these schisms will be inevitable because false teachers will infiltrate the church and it will prove those who are My approved, those who have been tried in the fire and come forth as gold.

Heresy is a mark of wrong thinking that leads to wrong living. The wrong thinking and the wrong living, the divisions, the heresies, are the natural allies here - one is the effect, the divisions; the other is the cause, the false thinking that leads to the divisions. So let none of us here tonight, wherever you're from, whatever place you hang your hat, let no one say that teaching does not matter, that heresy does not matter, that being inaccurate in the scripture and doctrine and theology does not matter - it does matter! What you believe determines how you behave! As one put it well: 'The soil of our deeds is our creeds, because we do what we believe is right'. It affects our practice.

Now we see here that unity, before Paul gets into the theology of the Lord's Table, unity is what was at stake at the church of Corinth. He's already addressed, if you remember in chapter 10, the Lord's Table - and again it was the theme of unity in the assembly. Look at chapter 10 verses 16 and 17: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread'. How many times do we find the word 'one', and the phrase or the idea of 'unity' in those two verses? It's right throughout it all, and as Paul comes to chapter 11 the exact same theme is there: are we unified as we come around the Lord's Table, do we see ourselves just as that loaf, one piece of loaf? And as each piece of bread is broken off and we assimilate it into our body, we ourselves - as Paul says in chapter 10 here - become that one loaf, united together as the body of Christ.

I wonder are we united as an assembly? Do we consider everybody in the assembly when we come around the Lord's Table? Is it really a feast of love, and even in a practical sense do we consider the less fortunate in the body, do we try and meet their needs? One verse that you very seldom hear expounded is 1 John 3:17: 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?'. 'By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, because ye love one another' - do we consider the weaker? Do we consider the poor? Do we consider the less fortunate?

Warren Wiersbe in his commentary tells the story of when he was at a Sunday School picnic, he was only into his teenage years, and they began to play a relay game - some of you young people have played it yourselves - you throw eggs to one another, and each time you catch an egg you step back another step, until the further you get away the harder you have to throw the egg, and then inevitably it becomes hilarious as the eggs crack over people. However, as they were playing this in all the hilarity and fun, some of the folk noticed two Sunday School pupils who were standing at the sidelines with their mouths agape and their eyes popping out of their sockets, absolutely fascinated. When they thought about it for a moment they realised that they came from a poor family, and they probably rarely ever ate

an egg, let alone threw them at one another. The little girl went over to the lady who was leading the games and asked: 'If there are any eggs left over, can my brother and I take them home?'. Wisely, the lady stopped the game before it was really over, and awarded the prizes, and gave all the eggs to the two children, because she knew - this is what we need to know, and the Corinthians needed to know - that it is wrong for some of the saints to have a good time at the expense of others! Before we go into the theology of the Lord's Supper, we've got to ask the question: are we one body, do we take into consideration the needs of each other? Are we united? Or are we divided? Do we have false ideas, is false teaching infiltrating the assembly? I don't know, but these things are what will divide the church of Jesus Christ, and the one place that we ought to be united and at one identification of unification in the church is the Lord's Table - and that is often the very factor that we forget about when we come to meet the Lord, that it speaks of communion with each other and with God.

I was hearing today about a meeting in Scotland, and one half of the meeting wasn't speaking to the other half of the meeting, and they all came as usual to the Lord's Table that morning and they sat down. Then one brother noticed that there was no bread on the table, and inquiries were made. An older elder brother in the assembly stood up, and he castigated them because they were out of love, out of fellowship with one another, and he said that the loaf wouldn't be on the table until it was all sorted out! That brother was right, do you know why? Because Paul says: 'It were better that you wouldn't even do this, as do it wrong and do it without unity'. Seemingly frustrated, trying to find a rational explanation for their behaviour he says, exasperated in verse 22: 'What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God? Can you not eat like this at home if you want to? If you want to get drunk, do it at home, don't do it at the Lord's Table! Or do you despise the church of God, the weaker brother in the church, those who aren't as well off as you? Do you shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not'. What he's saying is, if you're at your love feast, if you can't show love why have a love feast at all?

Friends, let's not fall into their perversion of the Supper, because these are types of sins that we seem not to take too seriously: division, false thinking about one another, a lack of love, a lack of compassion, a lack of caring for each other and laying our lives down for each other - and God forbid that we should ever come to the Lord's Table with a grudge with one another!

Then he comes, and it's almost trying to soften their hearts by reminding them of the Lord Himself. He comes to the Lord's institution of the Supper, verses 23 to 26, the purpose of the Lord's Table. One author says it's like a diamond, these verses, on a muddy road. One of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture, and it's given in the middle of a castigating rebuke from the apostle of such debauchery and drunkenness and idolatry. So he comes, and he says in verse 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'. Let me note a couple of things with you before we go on any further. Most conservative scholars believe that 1 Corinthians was probably written before the Gospels, and that means that Paul's account here of the institution of the Lord's Supper is the very first one, and it includes some literal quotations direct from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and they're absolutely consistent with what the gospel writers brought to us at a later date. We know that the Lord Jesus never spoke to Paul on the earth in His habitation as He was here, He was revealed to him on the Damascus Road of course, but we have to believe that what we have here is given to Paul directly by revelation from God probably in Arabia, where we read of him in Galatians 1 - it wasn't from the apostles, but it was direct from the Lord because he didn't commune with any man.

Now what does he remind them of in the institution of this Supper? He tells them two things: look backward and look forward. The Lord's institution of this Supper was intended to make them look backward, and very poignantly he reminds them that this was instituted on the night, look at it in verse 23, the same night in which He was betrayed. What he is insinuating here is that when the Lord instituted this supper He did it in an environment of wickedness, in an evil world - there was God establishing good; and what men meant for evil, God intended for good. I wonder is he making application to these believers in Corinth, that as they meet together for their fleshly lusts in their little political factions, there they are - but God, nevertheless, is doing a good thing because those among them who are Christ's and who are walking with Him, are being approved even in the midst of that wickedness and worldliness.

Another factor that we often miss when we look at the institution of the Lord's Supper is that the Lord Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the Passover. I think I reminded you of that last week as we looked at the headcovering, but it's strange that none of the gospel writers or even Paul here in Corinthians 11 indicate any details of that Passover meal, but rather their concentration is to show us that there's something new happening here: it's the end of Judaism, and now it's the beginning of God coming in to the Gentiles and the whole world in fact, and bringing His new covenant through the Lord Jesus Christ. But nevertheless it was still the Passover meal that the Lord took and adapted and changed into the new thing of the Lord's Supper.

Let me give you a resume of what happened at the Passover meal, and hopefully the jigsaw pieces will fall into place. The Passover meal began with the host pronouncing the blessing of the first cup. He lifted the first cup, one of four cups that were on the table at the Passover meal. That cup was full of red wine, and he would pass it from hand to hand after he had partaken of it himself, and after the first cup had been drunk they would take a bitter herb, and they would dip that bitter herb in some fruit sauce and then it would be eaten. After the first cup was taken the bitter herb was dipped in the fruit sauce and eaten, some one of them would stand and give a message giving the meaning of what the Passover was all about - the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt toward the Promised Land. Then the first part of a hymn was sung, and that hymn was called the 'Hallel' - 'Hallel' actually is like 'Hallelujah', 'Hallel, Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord', 'Hallel' simply means 'praise' - they would sing a hymn which was comprised of Psalm 113 through to 118, the first part was sung now. Then after that they would take the second cup, and it was passed to the host and he would pass it around, drinking of it. Then they would take unleavened bread, and they would break the unleavened bread and pass it round. Then after the unleavened bread they would eat the roasted sacrificial lamb, and then the third cup was passed around and drunk of after it was prayed over. When it was passed from hand to hand and drunk from the rest of the 'Hallel' was sung, and then the fourth cup was taken which celebrated the coming kingdom in a day that was yet to be, and it was drunk before immediately leaving.

Now what I want you to see is: in the gospel writings, and here in 1 Corinthians 11, it was the third cup that the Lord Jesus took and passed around his disciples - we saw last week in chapter 10 it was none other than what was called 'the cup of blessing'. Luke tells us in Luke 22:20, that in the same way He took the cup, that third cup, and after they had eaten, after they had eaten the sacrificial lamb, He said: 'This is my blood, poured out for you, of the new covenant' - and the record of Luke is that after they took that some brief words of warning were given by the Lord Jesus Christ, a rebuke and instruction, the meal was concluded by the singing of the 'Hallel', and they went out. Let me tie all that together for a moment: here's the first point, as far as I can see, and I would value your instruction, He did not take of the

fourth cup of the kingdom - because He said, in fact, on that occasion: 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'. When He had given thanks, and in the Greek it is the participle of 'eucharistio' (sp?), from which we get 'eucharist' - it just simply means 'thanksgiving' - when He had given thanks for the bread He passed it from hand to hand. Now what does that unleavened bread represent in the Passover? It represents the deliverance, the representation of their exodus - but now He takes it and He gives it a new meaning, to represent His body, the body of Messiah.

To the Jewish mind the body didn't just mean this flesh, it represented the whole person - not just the physical being - but Jesus' body would have meant the mystery of who He was, the incarnation, His whole life, His whole teaching, His ministry and His work, all that He was and all that He did. It says that He give it to His disciples. Most modern translations and scholars believe that that word 'broken' is not there, because of course the prophecy was that none of His bones would be broken. Nevertheless, it was passed from hand to hand, and Paul gives us the record of the Lord, and it says: 'This is for you'. I think those must be some of the most beautiful words in the whole of Scripture: 'This unleavened bread being broken, just as the children of Israel came from Egypt, bondage, into the Promised Land, this is my body being broken for you, and here you are, eat of it!'

The cup He gives them, that third cup of blessing, do you know what it represented? It represented the lamb's blood, Exodus 12, that was smeared upon the two doorposts and the lintel, that was protecting them as God came by and the angel came by. He takes that cup representing the blood of the lamb and He declares: 'This is the New Testament in my blood, shed not just for the Jews, but for the salvation of the world'. He turns to His disciples after taking this Passover, this Jewish feast, and totally making something new out of it that no man had ever seen before, and He says to His disciples: 'This is for you, now do this in remembrance of me'.

My friends, as we consider the typology of all this and the significance of it, let me just pause for a moment: do you realise that this isn't an option, this isn't an added extra for the Christian church? In fact, it is disobedience of the highest order not to break bread and drink from the cup, because it is the command of the Lord Jesus - it is sin not to remember Him! For the Hebrew, to remember meant much more than simply a memory or to bring something to mind, to merely recall something that had happened in the past, it actually means to go back psychologically in one's mind, to actually recapture as much of the reality and the significance of an event that you've already experienced, to almost feel that you were there - and that's what we've to do every first day of the week, do you do it my friend? I know that some of you don't, for I never see you, never see you! More than that: Christ never sees you!

What did He mean when He said: 'This is my body'? This has been debated down through all the centuries, when He give thanks on this did the molecules of the bread turn into the molecules of His body as the Roman Catholic Church teaches - transubstantiation? Of course it didn't, that is perhaps the most Satanic and blasphemous interpretation of the Lord's Supper that has ever been seen on the face of God's earth. This was metaphoric language, and a casual reading of the Scriptures would show you that this is the case - did the Lord Jesus not say in this same Upper Room: 'I am the vine and ye are the branches'? Did He literally mean that He was a vine and they were the branches? Of course He didn't. He said: 'I am the door, by me if any man enter in He shall be saved' - He didn't point to a door and say: 'That door is me, I am that door'. In fact in 1 Corinthians 10 that we studied a few weeks ago, Paul says that the rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness was Christ - does

that mean that Christ literally is a piece of granite, flinty, and hard and cold? Of course it doesn't. You maybe walk into a friend's or a neighbour's house and you see a photograph on the wall of somebody you don't recognise, and you point at it and you say: 'Who's that?', and the person says: 'Oh, that's my son', or, 'that's my daughter', or, 'that's my mother or father'. Would you ever say to them: 'I thought that was a piece of paper with a frame around it hanging on the wall'? You would never say that, because you know what they mean, they're talking in representatory, imaginary in the sense of imagery, language. They're saying: 'this represents', but they just say, 'that is my son', 'that is my daughter'.

The whole of the Lord's Supper, the breaking of the loaf, the drinking of the cup, is a representation to our physical senses for something that is spiritual. As we show forth the Lord's death till He come, what we are not doing is we are not sacrificing Christ all over again - that is the blasphemy of the mass! The sacrifice is complete, and that's why we're looking backward to something that has been done and is finished, it is a commemoration. It doesn't indicate either that the physical person of Christ is in the bread or in the cup, neither does it insinuate that Christ is beside the bread or beside the cup as the Lutherans believe - consubstantiation. What it means is that Christ is not in the bread or in the cup, but Christ is there in the people! Christ is there in the meeting by His Spirit, it's the spiritual presence of Christ that it signifies - and as we partake of that bread and of that wine it has been designated as the flesh and the blood of Christ not literally, but as we take it by faith in our minds and in our hearts we are trusting in the sacrificial death that He accomplished for us. As one man put it: 'Eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood are done with the mind and the heart, not with the teeth and the throat'. Didn't the Lord say in John 6: 'Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life' - did He mean literally eat His flesh and drink His blood? He could not have meant it literally: one, because He was sitting there as He gave the bread and wine, did He have two bodies? Was one body already dead when He was signifying the sacrifice? If it's a spiritual body, had He been dead and resurrected before He'd even gone to the cross or the tomb? It is absolutely impossible - and apart from all that, we know that it was a year before this institution was instigated after Jesus said: 'except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye shall have eternal life' - does that mean the disciples could not have eternal life for a whole year until they had the Lord's Supper instituted and given to them? Of course not! These words are spiritual, that's what He said Himself - the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was not instituted so that we could have a physical presence in our body or beside us of Christ, but so that we could know that we are His, and He is mine, and He is with us, and He is in us - not by bread and wine, but by His Spirit. Now as well as that He didn't say that 'the cup is my blood', He says the cup is the New Testament - the cup is not His blood, it is the New Testament in His blood.

Look backward, then he says 'look forward' - verse 26, the second half: 'ye do shew the Lord's death till he come'. It helps us look forward to a day when we will be with Him - why did he say that if we're already with Him in the presence of the bread and wine? It's looking to the day when we shall see Him as He is, and - Hallelujah - we shall be like Him. You know, it does show forth His death till He come, and it's only for believers - I think that's absolutely clear in the passage and every other verse of Scripture concerning the Lord's Table - but could I just say that I believe it's a great shame that there aren't more unbelievers at the Lord's Table, not partaking of the emblems, but witnessing the Lord's death till He comes. I've heard of children who have been born-again by seeing and witnessing the ordinance of the Lord's Table and realising the significance - do you remember the children around the Passover table? God told them that their children would say: 'What meaneth this?', and their father would tell them!

Looking backward, looking forward, and then thirdly and finally: our preparation for the Supper - our preparation. Twofold: look inward, and look outward. He says in verse 27: 'Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily', or unthoughtfully, 'shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ'. Now Paul isn't primarily talking about if you are unworthy person, of course if you're not saved this is not for you, it's for those who are saved and on their way to glory. But Paul is primarily talking about partaking in an unworthy manner, the way that you partake, not who you are. He said that if you partake of this feast without thought - now get the import of this please - you are guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord! If there's any fresh crucifixions that is the only sense that there could be one, that the sacrifice of Christ has already been made and you sin at His table - and it's almost, in a sense, as if you're putting the nails and the thorns in even more. That is not literal, of course.

How else can you eat of it unworthily? If you eat of it ritualistically without participating with your mind and your heart, you go through the motions and your emotions are not touched, you treat it lightly rather than seriously. You eat of it unworthily if you believe that it imparts some kind of grace or merit to you, that you're saved by eating it or it makes you cleaner, or it keeps you going on your way to heaven. Some other people come, as we've already said, with bitterness, with hatred toward another believer in the same assembly, or come with blatant sin in their life that they refuse to repent of - and all of that is eating and drinking unworthily, and it says you're guilty of the blood and body of Christ!

My friend, this is serious stuff. You dishonour His body, it's like trampling the flag of your country on the ground, only it's worse than that. Paul says every time you come to the Lord's Supper, therefore, a person ought to examine himself. Can I ask you, before I go any further: if you are at the Lord's Table how much time do you spend before you come? Do you rush out, wash your face, put your clothes on, out the door, bomb it down the road, sit down and then expect to have a time of worship and fellowship and meditation with the Lord Jesus? That is to drink and to eat unworthily, if you're not examining yourself, looking inwards. A person who eats and drinks without the right spirit, eat and drinks, Paul says, look at it, judgement to himself! The word in the Authorised is translated 'damnation', which is an incorrect translation because there is no condemnation, as Romans 8:1 tells us, for them which are in Christ Jesus. The word is the sense of a judgment, 'crema' (sp?) is the Greek word, he uses 'condemnation' later in verse 32 with regards to those who are in the world - they are condemned, 'catacrema' (sp?) - but the believer is only judged, it literally means 'chastened', out of love, to be disciplined. Now listen to this: this means that if you don't come to the Lord's Table and remember the Lord, or if you come and eat and drink unworthily, the Lord will discipline you out of love so that you'll not go into the condemnation of the world, so that you'll not be labelled with them - and even if it means, like some of these in Corinth who slept, that means they died, or they came under serious diseases, even if God has to do that to you, He will do it in love rather than see you condemned with those that are in the world. It mightn't seem like love, but it is.

The thought is powerful, and then he says don't just look inward to whether you're right, confess your sins, and if you confess your sins 1 John 1 tells us He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness - and you can come to that Table if you confess your sins to Christ, but confess them, and if you need to confess it to another brother and face him or her you have to do it! Then look outward, verse 29, you eat and drink unworthily if you eat and drink not discerning the Lord's body. Now of course that means the literal body of the Lord, and how He sacrificed that for you and for me, but I believe it has a dual meaning - it can also mean to discern the Lord's body as in the church, look outward to

your brethren and sisters, for as he said in chapter 10: 'We being many are one bread and one body' - and that supper, let us not forget this, this is Paul's main point, has to be a demonstration of the unity of the church together in love. But there was no unity in Corinth and there was very little love, in fact the celebration of the feast of love, the Lord's Supper, was only a demonstration of their schismata.

Beloved, if God loves us we ought also to love one another. Let me sum it all up in the words of one man of God who put it so well: 'This sacrament indicates' - I don't like that word 'sacrament', but nevertheless - 'indicates the whole scope of Christ's relationship to us. It indicates Christ for us in the atonement; it indicates Christ in us by appropriation; it indicates Christ among us by communion; it indicates Christ to us in the second advent. It is a feast in commemoration of Christ's death; it is a feast in recognition of Christ's life; it is a feast in proclamation of Christ is coming - therefore, in all these elements, the Lord's Supper binds the past, the future, to the present moment. It is our present communion with Christ, which links us to the past commemoration of His death, and the future anticipation of His return'.

'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup' - is it often? 'This do in remembrance of me', verse 24 is in the present continuous tense, which means 'remember continually' - remember continually! In the days of the Covenanters in Scotland a young girl was going to attend the Lord's Supper held by the Covenanters on a Sunday afternoon. It was a service that had been prohibited by the law, and the soldiers of the King of England were looking everywhere for people who were going to meet together and partake of the Table. As the girl turned one corner on her way she came face-to-face with a band of soldiers and she knew she was trapped. For a moment she wondered what she was going to do or what she was going to say, and she was unwilling to lie about what she was doing but she knew it would be deadly to tell the truth. Immediately on being asked the question where she was going, she found herself answering - listen to this, this is marvellous: 'My elder brother has died, and they are going to read his will is afternoon, and he has done something for me and has left something for me, and I want to hear them read the will' - and they allowed her to go.

Do you go? When you're there do you remember? Do you worship? Jesus says: 'Do you remember me?'

Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, we worship at Thy feet for Thy great sacrifice for us, Thy people, that we may be one with Thee, even as Thou art one with Thy Father. Our Father, we thank Thee that Thou didst send Thy Son to bleed and die, and gave Him to this fallen world. Oh, our Father, we give Thee thanks; we praise Thee for the love of Jesus. Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for going to the cross, for bleeding and shedding Thy blood, and offering Thy body prepared for death in holiness and spotlessness, the Lamb, and laying it down for me. Lord, let us never forget, let us always remember, and let us be united in Thee as Thou art one. Amen.

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