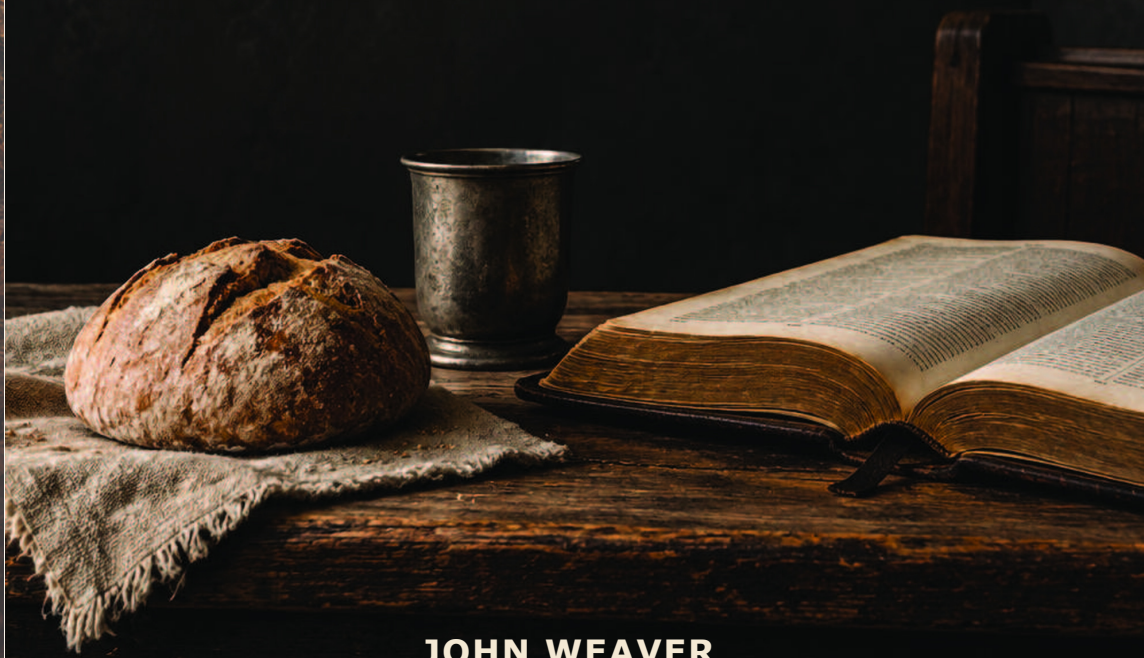
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The Lord's Supper

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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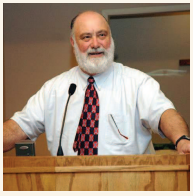
This do in remembrance of me.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:24, EXCERPT

The Lord's Supper calls the church to remembrance, examination, and fellowship. In this ten-message series, John Weaver considers the meaning and practice of the ordinance through biblical exposition. These sermons invite readers to examine their understanding and participation, weighing the responsibilities of the gathered church by Scripture rather than custom alone.

"The only thing that can bind the consciences of men is the Word of God."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

The Lord's Supper

Part One

Introduction and Context

Several have asked questions concerning the Lord's Supper. It is my intent to begin an introductory message today and then preach on this until I get through, which may take four, five, six messages, or whatever is necessary. In the next message I will deal with the significance, the partakers, the elements, and other matters. I hate to gloss over something important when there is so much great information in Scripture concerning it. As I read this text, undoubtedly questions will arise in your mind, but hold them, because I will probably answer those questions and deal with them in the not-too-distant future.

In 1 Corinthians 11, beginning with verse 20, Paul writes: “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 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 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 examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

The Lord’s Supper as an Ordinance

"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."

I cannot help but smile when I read that, when the Apostle Paul said, "and the rest will I set in order when I come." I can just imagine that some of these Corinthians probably received a strong tongue-lashing from the Apostle Paul.

The Lord's Supper as an Ordinance

We are going to talk about the Lord's Supper. First of all, the Lord's Supper is indeed an ordinance. The word ordinance refers to that which has been instituted, appointed, and ordained by God. Thus, the Lord's Supper is that which God Himself has directed and instituted. It is often called a sovereign ordinance, indicating that

God Himself ordained it and set it up. It is also called a gospel ordinance because it symbolizes the realities of the gospel.

There are only two ordinances that are sovereign or gospel institutions in this light: number one, baptism, and number two, the Lord's Supper.

Key Biblical Passages

I want to be exceedingly biblical as I deal with this, because there is so much involved that most of the time we do not think concerning it. There are four main passages in the Bible that relate to the Lord's Supper. We are not going to look at all four today, but we will look at them before we finish the study. They are Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11.

Names Given to the Lord's Supper

There are other allusions certainly in the Bible to the Lord's Supper, but these are the four definitive passages. This is basic and introductory material, so we begin by looking at the names given to us in the Bible concerning the Lord's Supper.

Names are important. As you read through the Old Testament, many times you may look at these names and say, "Why in the world would anyone call their child a name that you cannot even pronounce?" Those names, however, had a great deal of significance. Even when our Lord called Peter "Peter," He did so for a reason, because the name means "a rock." That is exactly what was supposed to characterize the Apostle Peter.

The Lord's Table: Contrast and Identification

The Lord's Supper is referred to first and foremost as the Lord's table. First Corinthians 10:21 says, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." In this particular instance, it is simply referred to as the Lord's table.

In this context there is, first of all, a contrast, and secondly, an identification. The contrast is between the Lord's table and the table of devils. The passage says, "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord

and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." We must understand, first and foremost, that eating implies fellowship and agreement. Whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, when people sit down to eat, it basically implies that there is fellowship and agreement.

Why, then, did our Lord say through the Apostle Paul that you cannot be a partaker of the Lord's table and the table of devils? Simply because there is absolutely no agreement between the Lord and the devils. There is no communion. There is no fellowship. In other words, if you are talking about the Lord's table on the one hand and the table of devils on the other hand, each one is mutually exclusive of the other.

So here is a strong contrast. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, beginning with verse 14, the Apostle Paul emphasizes this fact: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Now answer these questions in your minds. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" The answer is none. "What communion hath light with darkness?" None. "Or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" that is, the devil. None. "And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Once again, none. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" None.

"For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

There can be absolutely no fellowship, no agreement, and no concord between Christ and the devil. Whenever you come to the Lord's table, you are saying, "Lord, I'm eating with you. I'm fellowshipping with you. I'm agreeing with you." If you are communing with Christ, then you are not only agreeing with and acknowledging Him; you are also denying and renouncing anything and everything contrary to Him. Simply by the fact that it is the

Lord's table, He is saying that you cannot have communion with Him and devils at the same time.

Men may attempt to do so. Unbelievers could come to the Lord's table and pretend to be believers. A demonic person could come and pretend to be a believer. He may partake of the symbol, but he cannot partake of the reality. Do you follow me? In reality, there is no agreement between Christ and the devil, and no concord between him that believeth and he that does not believe.

The Bible is telling us once again that there is a strong contrast. An idolatrous church cannot be a true church. Neither can an idolater be a true Christian. An idolater may repent and become a Christian, but you cannot be an idolater and a Christian at the same time in the strictest sense of the word. You cannot be a church that honors the Lord and at the same time be an unthankful, whoremongering church that dishonors the Lord.

It is one or the other. When people try to say, "Well, I'm going to play both sides," they are being unscriptural and unbiblical. You remember in Hosea chapter 1 and verse 9, without turning there, there are those that God calls Lo-Ammi. When Hosea's child was to be named Lo-Ammi, Lo-Ammi means "not my people." There are some that are not his people. No matter how many call themselves his people, those who are living an ungodly and wicked life are still not his people.

So the very first thing you see is a contrast. How can one really, truly, genuinely drink the wine of the Lord's Supper in true faith in his shed blood and sacrifice, in remembrance of his love and in honor to his name, and at the same time drink the cup of devils, which dishonors him, denies him, and repudiates him? The answer is that it is utterly impossible and utterly inconsistent.

As our Lord said, you cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot serve Christ and Belial. There is no agreement between the temple of God and idols. We must understand that there is indeed a contrast when it is called the Lord's table and the table of devils.

What you eat, in a real, genuine sense of the word, determines how you think and how you act. That is true physically. One of my

favorite signs that I have seen as I travel around was on a counter in a store: “Children left unattended by their parents will be given a strong cup of coffee, all the candy they can eat, and a free puppy.” Give a little kid a big cup of caffeine and a lot of sugar, and what have you got on your hands? You have real terror on your hands, because what he eats ultimately determines basically what he thinks and how he acts.

Now, let me show you that in the Scripture. In James chapter 3, verse 13, James asks, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?” Watch this question. Now note wisdom and knowledge: “Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.”

The point I am trying to make right here is simple: what you think determines how you act. Then he says, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” Now look what he says: “This wisdom descendeth not from above,” that is, it does not come from God, but “is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

And then here is this contrast again: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” So very obviously, the very first thing our Lord does is say this: it is the Lord’s table. So you have, first of all, a contrast.

Secondly, you have an identification. In 1 Corinthians 10:21, Paul says, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.” In the Greek, the phrase is a genitive of description. By that, it simply means that it is the table which particularly and peculiarly belongs to the Lord. It is His table. Thus, when you sit at His table, you are identifying yourself with Christ, you are communing with Him, and you are embracing Him, His Lordship, His teaching, and His instruction.

So first, it is referred to in Scripture as the Lord's Table. Secondly, if you look in 1 Corinthians 11:20, it is called the Lord's Supper: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." It is called the Lord's Supper because this is the supper that belongs particularly to the Lord. The Lord's Supper was also sometimes used by the early church to identify what is known as the agape, which is the Greek word for love, or the love feast.

The Lord's Supper: Not a Sacrifice

I want to emphasize this at this particular point, because you are going to hear it emphasized several times in the future: it is the Lord's Supper; it is not a sacrifice. The Lord's Supper is a feast on a table and not a sacrifice on an altar. The only altar that we have had as Christians is that of the cross, and that was a once-and-for-all sacrifice. Hebrews 10:10, referring to Jesus Christ, says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Once for all. How many times was Jesus Christ given as a sacrifice? Once for all. So it is a supper; it is not a sacrifice. When the Catholics talk about transubstantiation and call the Mass an unbloody sacrifice, that is actually blasphemous, for Jesus Christ gave Himself, the Bible teaches, once for all.

The love feast, or the agape, and the Lord's Supper were and are two distinct and separate things. Yet in the early church, one usually preceded the other, and sometimes they were actually merged together.

That is what produced the problem in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. That is why the Apostle Paul rebukes these Corinthians because of what happened at the love feast which preceded the Lord's Supper. I will deal with that later, but in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 he is talking about eating and drinking at the Lord's table unworthily. He is talking about examining yourself and judging yourselves. If you do not understand what is happening in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, you cannot understand the impact and importance of the Lord's Supper.

Communion: Fellowship with Christ and Believers

So it is the Lord's table. It is the Lord's Supper in the sense that it is not a sacrifice; it is a meal. Thirdly, it is also referred to and called

communion. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, we read: "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?" The Greek word for communion is koinonia. The word communion occurs twice in verse 16. In verse 20, he says, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."

The word fellowship in verse 20 is the same Greek word, koinonia, or communion. Thus, fellowship and communion are basically the same. When the Bible calls the meal communion, it also indicates that the meal is a fellowship. Someone has aptly described fellowship as being fellows in the same ship. That is why we get the expression, "we're all in the same boat together." That is fellowship, basically speaking.

Each of these words is important. The word communion clearly indicates that the church communes with Christ corporately, as a body. But it also clearly teaches that we commune with each other at the same time. When the Lord's Table or the Lord's Supper is referred to as communion, it does not simply mean that we are together corporately and commune with the Lord. Yes, we are; but we are also communing individually with each other. We are all stating that we are nourished, sustained, and kept by the Lord, and that we associate and identify not just with Him, but with each other as well. Now let me show you the impact of this word fellowship.

First John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Notice what he said: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” When we have communion, or the Lord’s table, or the Lord’s supper, it is not merely that we are communing with the Lord; we are also communing with each other.

As baptism pictures our initiation into Christ, so the Lord’s table, or the Lord’s supper, or communion, symbolizes that we are continuing to feed upon Christ. That is, we are nourished by him and sustained by him. There is a passage in John 6 that we need to understand in this light. Beginning with verse 32, Jesus said, “Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

There is a contrast between manna in the Old Testament, which is a type, or was a type, of Christ, and the actual giving of Christ. Christ is saying that he is the true bread. Verse 33 says, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." They said unto him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

He says, "I am that bread of life." Once again, watch carefully: "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

This passage is where the Roman Catholics get their doctrine of transubstantiation. In that doctrine, the priest says his magical words, "hocus pocus"—and that is where that expression came from, in Latin, literally. Once he has said his incantation, the wine is supposed to change into the actual blood of Christ and the bread into the actual body of Christ.

If that is true, anyone who ate that meal would be cannibals. But notice what our Lord said: "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him." Then He said, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." How did Christ live by the Father? Through His power, through His will, and through His word. He did not physically eat God the Father. Of course not. He says, "even so he shall live by me." Therefore, the eating of Christ in this context is not physical.

In John 6:63, still in the context of Christ teaching that He is the bread of life, He says: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Was He talking about a literal eating of His flesh and a literal drinking of His blood? No. He said, “My flesh profiteth nothing.” No flesh profiteth. It is the words that He speaks; they are spirit and they are life.

Living by Christ, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, is a picture and symbol of the fact that we draw our life, nourishment, and sustenance from Him—all His words and all His truth. We live in, through, and by them, and apply them in our lives. That is eating Him as the bread of life and drinking His blood, so to speak. It is not a literal, physical act; it simply means that we live by His words and His truth.

As we feed upon Him—that is, His truth, His word, His power, and His life—we are at His table, having His supper and communing with Him and with each other. Suppose Doc wanted to do what was wrong and I wanted to do what was right. Is there any communion or fellowship between us? No. The only way we can have communion with each other is as we commune in the Lord and both have the same mind, principles, truth, aims, and goals.

The Cup of Blessing and the Cup of the Lord

Thus it is called the Lord’s table, the Lord’s supper, and communion. Fourthly, it is called the cup of blessing. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul says: “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?" Here it is called the cup of blessing. Interestingly, in this verse, the phrase "the cup of blessing" designates and stands for the whole: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The phrase refers to the whole. It was His cup that produced the cup of blessing.

Keep 1 Corinthians 10 in mind as well, and turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1. You can see quickly why the Lord's table is sometimes called the cup of blessing. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." What does the cup of blessing include? All spiritual blessings that are in Christ. Every blessing that you and I have ever had, or ever will have, has been in and through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is called the cup of blessing. Now return to 1 Corinthians 10:16, where Paul says, "the cup of blessing."

Paul adds the phrase, "which we bless": "the cup of blessing which we bless." What does that mean? First, it could refer to the prayer of the presiding elder when he asks God's blessing upon the communion. I would go further and say that this might be included. But when Paul writes "the cup of blessing which we bless," it refers to the grateful and thankful heart of every true believer who realizes that his salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. The cup represents the shed blood of Jesus Christ. When we think of the supreme sacrifice of that shed blood, it should render every believer grateful and thankful, filled with heartfelt praise for the salvation found only in Jesus Christ.

There is another thought here. "The cup of blessing which we bless" refers to the fact that the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, communion, is not a burden, but a blessing. The whole thing is indeed a blessing; therefore it has been called the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, communion, and the cup of blessing.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 10:21: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." Note the first part: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." Sometimes, then, it is simply referred to as the cup of the Lord. That is, once again, a

genitive of description. It is that cup which particularly and peculiarly belongs to the Lord.

The word “cup” is interesting to study in the New Testament. How can the Lord’s Table be referred to as the cup of the Lord? The cup would be that portion which God the Father gave to God the Son. Let me show you a couple of illustrations from Scripture. In Matthew 26:42, Scripture says, “He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” What cup is that—the cup of suffering, the cup of bearing the sins of His people? Look in John 18:11. They had come to arrest Christ.

Peter drew out his sword and cut off Malchus's ear. Here is what our Lord said to Peter in John 18:11: "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

In 1 Corinthians 11:25, the Lord's table, the Lord's supper, communion, and the cup of blessing are sometimes simply called the cup of the Lord: "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." Note the words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." How can it be called the cup of the Lord? Because it was that cup which the Father gave to Christ, from which Christ drank and gave Himself.

How was Jesus Christ slain? As the Lamb of God, first of all, He was slain determinatively. That means He was slain in the will and counsel of God before the world ever began. That is why He is called the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth. He was slain determinatively in the will of God.

Secondly, He was slain prophetically. Beginning in the book of Genesis, Genesis 3:15, the Protevangelium, shows once again that Christ must suffer and die. He was slain determinatively, prophetically, and symbolically in all those sacrifices in the Old Testament. Fourthly, He was slain actually, in time and history, as He gave Himself a sacrifice on the cross. It is indeed called the cup of

the Lord because it is the cup which He drank, from which He gave us salvation.

The Breaking of Bread and the Eucharist

It is the Lord's table, the Lord's supper, communion, the cup of blessing, and the cup of the Lord. Fifthly, it is called the breaking of bread.

Acts 2:42 speaks of the early disciples: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 20:7 says, "And 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." Verse 11 adds, "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

The phrase "the breaking of bread" was a term that was in vogue during the apostolic times. I must confess that there is a debate as to what this phrase actually refers to. Some say it refers to the Lord's Supper, a common meal, or the love feast, or sometimes all of those things together. Generally speaking, this phrase has not been widely used since the apostolic era. It is a phrase that probably would need some explanation when it is used because it could refer to the Lord's Supper.

What did He say in 1 Corinthians 11? In verses 23 and 24, the Apostle 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." The breaking of bread can be a legitimate name for the Lord's Supper because that's exactly what our Lord did.

If you use the phrase, usually you have to explain it because sometimes it can refer to something else as well. Let me give you an illustration. I remember when I was a boy, in our church there was an old man and woman. He was the piano player. He did not play the piano with his fingers on the keys like most people. He played like

this, and it was loud, but he could play. He used to play in a band, which is why he played so loudly, I suppose.

I never will forget standing by my father when that old man came up to him. This happened on numerous occasions. He would say, "Mr. Weaver, would it be all right if my wife and I came out and broke bread with you today?" What did he just do? He invited himself to our house for dinner. My dad would always say, "Sure, we'd be glad to have you."

The phrase "breaking of bread" could simply refer to fellowship or eating a meal with someone. That is why I said it could refer to the love feast, a common meal, or the Lord's Supper. You have to clarify what you mean by the breaking of bread. Sometimes it is called the breaking of bread.

Sixthly and finally, the Lord's table, the Lord's supper, communion, the cup of blessing, the cup of the Lord, and the breaking of bread can also be called the Eucharist. That is not a Roman Catholic term; it is a Bible term. Look in your Bibles to Matthew 26 and verse 27, and then we will go to Mark 14.

Matthew 26:27 says, “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” He took the cup and gave thanks. Mark 14:23 likewise says, “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.” Note the words, “when he had given thanks.” In 1 Corinthians 14:16, Paul says, “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks?” Now, in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, in relation to the Lord’s Supper, and in 1 Corinthians 11 as well, He gave thanks.

The Greek word is eucharistos. It is where we get the English word Eucharist. The word eucharistos simply means to be grateful, to be thankful, to be pleasing and agreeable to God. Eucharistia refers to the giving of thanks, and the verb eucharisto means to consecrate a thing by the giving of thanks or to bless. How, then, can communion at the Lord’s table be called the Eucharist? Because we give thanks and bless God for what He has provided for us in Jesus Christ. When we thank God, we are offering Him the praise, the

honor, and the glory for His so great salvation that He has given us through Jesus Christ.

Summary of Names and Applications

There are six names in Scripture given to the Lord's table. In the names given to the Lord's Supper, we may see the purpose, aim, and design of the supper. Its purpose is to remember, honor, and symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Its aim is communion and fellowship, and its design is to bless and unite the saints.

Each name is important because each portrays a distinct aspect of the supper and should be considered and understood by the saints. You should know why it is the Lord's table, in contrast to the tables of devils; why it is the Lord's supper and not a sacrifice; and why it is communion, because it is not just communing with Him, but with other believers. You should know why it is the cup of blessing, why it is the cup of the Lord, why it is breaking of bread together, and why it is the Eucharist.

Why is it we give thanks unto Him? We have not even touched the significance—the partakers, the elements, and all of this. But I want you to see, in this general introduction, that God has given us the names which should teach us generally concerning the Lord's table.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us and teach us. Lord, help us to learn, so that when we observe the Lord's table, we may not do so unworthily, but may do so, Lord, as unto Thee, giving honor and glory to the one true and living God, through Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and our salvation. In Thy name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Lord's Supper

Part Two

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 11:20-34 (KJV)

When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, everyone taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have you 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 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 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.

Introduction and Review

You remember last week as I began the introduction to this series, I told you that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance, and by that I mean it is something that is instituted, ordered, and ordained by God himself. Consequently, it is referred to then as a sovereign ordinance, because our Lord himself instituted it, and secondly, many times it is also called a gospel ordinance because it symbolizes the realities of the gospel. Thus there are only two such ordinances in the Bible, and that is, especially in the New Testament, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Now last week we just looked at the names that were given to the Lord's Supper in the Bible. Remember I told you it's called the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, Communion, the Cup of Blessing, the Cup of the Lord, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist. And let me just emphasize this for clarity's sake, when I'm using the word Eucharist, I'm not using a Roman Catholic term; that is a Bible term, which just simply means gratefulness or thankfulness and blessing, and it has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church.

So we just kind of looked at the names that were given to the Lord's Supper so that we could gather some type of understanding

about it. Now today I want to go a little bit further and show you the significance of the Lord's Supper. And the significance I hope is going to be increased because I'm going to be showing you verse after verse of what is symbolized in the Lord's Supper. And you can see this symbolism in the different types of meals that are given to us in Scripture. First of all, let me just say this and make sure that if you write down point one, you make sure that you put down that the very first thing I'm going to say is this. The significance of the Lord's Supper is that it may be seen in that it symbolizes a sacrificial meal. Now, notice I put it symbolizes a sacrificial meal. So once again, it's important for you to understand, I did not say that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice, nor did I say that it was a sacrificial meal in and of itself.

The Lord's Supper as a Symbolic Sacrificial Meal

I said it symbolized a sacrificial meal. Why can I not say that it is a sacrifice? Well, if you'll look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 9, you will understand why. I hit upon this point last week in the introduction. I used a different verse, but I want to show you once again that there is only one sacrifice, and that was the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. So in Hebrews chapter 9, look in verse 26.

"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." How many times does Christ have to offer Himself to complete salvation? Once—once for all. Hebrews 10:11 says, "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." This refers to the Levitical priesthood. Verse 12 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." How many times did Christ have to sacrifice Himself? Again, the Scripture says, once for all.

I did not say the Lord's Supper was a sacrificial meal. I said it symbolized a sacrificial meal.

To understand that concept, we must refer back to the Old Testament. When there was a sacrifice, a portion went to God on the altar, a portion went to the priest, and a portion was reserved for the people. Thus the priest, the people, and God ate of the sacrifice. This symbolized that we have fellowship with God.

In Exodus 24:4, we read, "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD."

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 24:4-11; Leviticus 3:1-11 (KJV)

So now there's a sacrifice:

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

What were they doing? Once the sacrifice was given, it was a symbol that they were fellowshipping with God.

Look in the book of Leviticus chapter 3. Notice with verse one. We're talking about a sacrifice:

"And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer it of the herd; whether it be a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.

And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round

> about. And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away. And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD. And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the LORD be of the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. If he offer a lamb for his offering, then shall he offer it before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle the blood thereof round about upon the altar."

"And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat thereof, and the whole rump, it shall he take off hard by the backbone; and the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away. And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire unto the LORD."

I read this passage for two reasons: first, to show you the Lord's portion in this sacrifice; and then, as you shall see in just a moment, for another reason. Understand that he is talking about a meal, a meal in which the Lord symbolically partakes. Leviticus 19:5-6 says, "And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it at your own will. It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow: and if ought remain until the third day, it shall be burnt in the fire."

God is saying that the people have a portion in this sacrifice as well, and they have two days to eat what is given to them. On the third day, whatever remains should be burnt in the fire. Thus, God has a portion in this, the people have a portion in this, and so does the priest.

Deuteronomy 27:7 says, “And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.” They can eat of the offerings, or eat of the sacrifices. As you turn to 1 Corinthians 10, may I remind you of Numbers 25? The children of Israel got in trouble because they ate of the sacrifices of the heathen there, and God killed them. Why? Because they were fellowshipping with the devils of the heathen. To eat a sacrificial meal is symbolic of fellowshipping with whomever you eat. Now, in 1 Corinthians 10, you will understand once again what the Apostle Paul meant when he said this. Notice verse 16.

He says, “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.” He is saying that this is a fellowship meal. In verse 20, he says, “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” Then he says, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”

You understand why, when a sacrifice was offered in the Old Testament, a portion went to God, a portion went to the priest, and a portion went to the people. When I say that the Lord’s Supper is symbolical of a sacrificial meal, understand first and foremost that all the Old Testament sacrifices were pictorial and emblematical of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. Every lamb slain in the Old Testament was a picture and type of Christ.

That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 24 that the bread represents His body, which was broken for us. As His body was broken for us, so His blood was shed for us. The people did have a part in the sacrifice. They did not apply the blood to the altar, but they did have a part in the sacrifice.

The man who brought the sacrifice first had to lay his hand upon the head of his sacrifice. Why? It was identification. By laying his hand upon the animal, the man was saying, “I am identifying myself with this animal. I should be the one dying, but I have brought a

substitute. This animal is going to die in my place." The second thing he did was kill it. That is what the Bible says in Leviticus 3.

He slew it with a knife there. Then the priest took it and applied the blood. But it was the man who laid his hand upon the head of the animal who actually slew it. Why? Here is the clearest passage of Scripture explaining why the man who brought the sacrifice killed the sacrifice. Isaiah 53:4 says, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Why did the man kill the sacrifice? Because he realized it was his sins that demanded the death of that sacrifice. It was his wickedness that brought to pass the necessity for that sacrifice. Here is a picture of our sins being imputed and laid upon the great sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason the Lord's Supper is symbolical of a sacrificial meal is that, just as in the Old Testament the Old Testament saint was uniquely and particularly identified with his sacrifice, so we are uniquely and particularly identified with Jesus Christ. It was not merely that our sins demanded His satisfaction. As we read through the Bible, we find that His death was our death, His burial was our burial, and His resurrection was our resurrection.

Romans 6:3 says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." This shows how uniquely bound up in the sacrifice of Christ are all of God's people.

The Lord’s Supper as a Covenantal Meal

Ephesians 2:5 says, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

We were buried with Him. We died with Him. We were raised in Him. We ascended with Him. We are seated with Him in heavenly places. Just as the Old Testament saint’s life was uniquely and particularly bound up with that of the sacrifice, so our lives are uniquely and particularly bound up in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

That is why, first and foremost, the Lord’s Supper symbolizes a sacrificial meal. Secondly, it also symbolizes and teaches us that it is a covenantal meal. You must remember that the Lord’s Supper was instituted in the context of the Passover. When the time came for the Passover lamb to die, the Passover was not simply a ritual or ceremony; it was also a meal.

The Lord's Supper as a Covenantal Meal

The Passover was instituted to memorialize Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. God had said that the firstborn of every family was going to die. What did those Hebrews have to do? They had to put the blood of the Lamb over their doorposts, and God said, “When I see the blood, I’ll pass over you.” Thus, in the Passover, God spared His people but judged His enemies.

In this sense, the Passover in the Old Testament was a picture and type of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. Just as Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt and brought into the glorious liberty and freedom of their God, so we who are in the true sacrifice and the true Passover are brought out of bondage to sin and delivered to the freedom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Covenants in the Bible were usually confirmed with a covenantal meal. The parties who made and entered into the covenant ate together. This should give us an understanding of why the Lord's Supper is so important. It not only symbolizes a sacrificial meal, but also a covenantal meal.

In Genesis 26:26-31, we read: "Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace."

What did they do after they made the covenant? They ate a covenantal meal together.

In Genesis 31, Jacob has escaped from Laban with his daughters, and Laban follows hard after him. Laban said unto Jacob, "These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee."

Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. He said unto his brethren, "Gather stones;" and they took stones, and made an heap: "and they did eat there upon the heap." Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. Laban said, "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Here again, the covenant was confirmed by a meal.

"If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, and

the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount."

What happened after they made a covenant? They celebrated it with a covenantal meal. One other passage, 2 Samuel 3:20, gives another illustration. Abner and David had made a covenant together: "So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast." Then Abner told David what he would do, David told Abner what he would do, and David sent him away. After every covenant, there is a covenantal meal. The new covenant is no exception.

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 8:6-12; 9:15, 22 (KJV)

Do you remember in Jeremiah 31? There God said He was going to enter into a new covenant, not according to the covenant that He made with the fathers, which was written in stone. But in Jeremiah 31, God says He is going to enter into a new covenant, and the law is going to be written upon our hearts. In Hebrews chapter 8, this is quoted from Jeremiah 31. Let us begin reading with verse 6 to show you this new covenant.

Hebrews 8:6: “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.”

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother,

saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Now, if you look in chapter 9, beginning with verse 15, Hebrews 9:15 says, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." Then, in verse 22, he says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." So he is talking about this new covenant. Now turn to Matthew 26, beginning with verse 26, and see what our Lord says as He institutes the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper as a Covenantal Meal

Matthew 26:26–28 says, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." He instituted the Supper in the context of the Passover meal.

What is He doing? There is a new covenant. There is a covenantal meal. In Mark 14:24, He says, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." In Luke 22:20, He says, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." First Corinthians 11:25 says, "After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood."

The significance of the Lord's Supper is not simply that it symbolizes a sacrificial meal, which it does, showing that our fellowship is with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a covenantal meal. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are symbolically reliving and renewing that covenant, while pledging ourselves afresh and anew, with all our loyalty, to Jesus Christ.

In other words, the Lord's Supper as a covenantal meal reminds us that we are a covenantal people. We are in covenant with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and each other. Thus, the Lord's Supper is not only symbolic of a sacrificial meal; it also teaches us that it is a covenantal meal. Thirdly, it is a memorial meal.

The Lord's Supper as a Memorial Meal

In 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, our Lord says, "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you." He then says, "This do in remembrance of me." And concerning the cup: "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."

So it is a memorial meal as well. The word remembrance is the Greek word anamnesis, which literally indicates a remembering, a recollection, or a calling to mind. The Lord's Supper is a memorial meal in that it calls to mind and calls us to remember the person of Jesus Christ.

As a memorial meal, we are to remember the entire and complete person of Christ, not just one aspect of His life. We are to remember who He was: His birth, His life, His miracles, His suffering, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension—or, you could say, His humiliation and His glorification. We remember everything about Him. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

When we remember the person of Jesus Christ, we remember who He was and what He was. He was the God-Man. Thus, as a memorial meal, we concentrate not just on the fact that it is symbolized by a sacrificial meal and a covenantal meal; it is a memorial meal in that we remember Him—everything about Him.

Now consider this question carefully, and answer it in your mind: Which was more important, the blood that Jesus Christ shed at His circumcision or the blood that He shed on the cross? Which is the most important? The obvious answer most people will give is His

blood on the cross, because that is where He forgave me my sins; that is what covered my sins. It is that blood that is more important than the other. Well, I am thankful for the blood on the cross.

I want you to understand that it was His life that gave the blood He shed on the cross its merits and its value. You remember Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5? “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” If Jesus Christ had not come and kept the law of God perfectly, personally, and perpetually, what about the blood that was shed on the cross? It was His life that gave merit to the shed blood. He had a life of obedience.

We did not simply need forgiveness for our sins. We did need that, and that is true. But more than that, we needed a positive righteousness. Suppose that Jesus Christ came and died and gave you only forgiveness of your sins. Would that get you into the presence of God? The answer is no. It might keep you out of hell, but it would not get you into the presence of God. To enter the presence of God the Father, you need more than forgiveness of sins; you need a perfect righteousness.

That is what Jesus Christ did when He came and was made of a woman and made under the law. He worked out, earned, and merited a perfect righteousness by being perfectly obedient to every aspect of the law, including circumcision. The blood shed at His circumcision was just as important as the blood He shed on the cross. That is why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

God took our sins and imputed them to Christ. Then He took the righteousness Christ earned and imputed that righteousness to us, so that we are not only forgiven, but now have a positive righteousness. As a memorial meal, we remember the totality of His person.

Fourthly, it is a commemorative meal. A memorial meal and a commemorative meal are closely related and have overlapping similarities, yet there is a distinction: a memorial meal remembers

the whole, while a commemorative meal commemorates an aspect of His work.

The Lord's Supper as a Commemorative Meal

For instance, in Matthew 26:28, He speaks about the shedding of His blood and says, “which is shed for many.” In Mark 14:24, once again, speaking of His blood, He says, “which was shed for many.” Then in Luke 22:20, He says, “which is shed for you.” In other words, the commemorative aspect focuses upon a certain work that the Lord completed and performed.

Remember that in Egypt, God said the death angel was going to pass over every house in Egypt, and the firstborn of everyone was going to die. The only way there could be an escape was if blood was on the doorposts. Those who believed God slew a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts. When the death angel came and saw the blood, he passed over that house. Those who did not believe and did not put the blood on their doorposts lost their firstborn.

All the lambs that were slain during that eventful night were typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not just the lambs slain in Egypt that night, but all the lambs also that were slain thereafter were typical of our Lord. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7, the Scripture says: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

Who is the true Passover Lamb? Jesus Christ. When you call the Lord’s Supper a commemorative meal, it is commemorating that particular aspect, or that particular work, of the Lord’s redemption. That is why the Bible says in John 8:36, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” The Lord’s Supper, then, commemorates the death of Jesus Christ and points to Him as the true and real Passover that delivered us, not just from Egypt, but from our sins and from death.

The Lord's Supper as a Communion Meal

and from Satan into everlasting life. So it is symbolically a sacrificial meal. It is a covenantal meal. It is a memorial meal. It is a

commemorative meal. And fifthly, it is a communion meal. Without turning to all the scriptures, since you're in 1 Corinthians, look there at chapter 10 again, 1 Corinthians chapter 10. But as you turn to 1 Corinthians 10 and Mark 14 and verse 22, our Lord says, "Take, eat." And Mark 14, 23, they drank all of it. Now, in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 16, "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?"

Now, I'm not going to tarry here because I emphasized this last week. But it is a communion meal which is indicative of the fact that, number one, we commune with Christ. By the way, I hope you know that the scripture teaches in Colossians 3 and verse 4 that Christ is our life. We have no life apart from him. You remember what he said in John 15, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Can a branch exist without the vine? No. No. Our life is bound up in Christ. John 6, which I covered last week, I'm not going to go over again, shows how we feed upon Christ and are nourished by him. But also, it is a communion meal, not in the sense that we just commune with Christ, but we also commune with the brethren. If we are believers, we have fellowship one with another. We are believers in Christ.

Now, here's what the Bible says in Ephesians 5 in verse 30. Listen carefully. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Now, the interesting thing is, in the context, he's talking about the husband and wife relationship. And then he says this, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." And then you get to verse 32, and Paul says, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." So what is he saying? He's saying we're not only members of Christ, we're members of one another. And as we fellowship with Christ, we are fellowshipping with Him. We are acknowledging in this communion meal, we are acknowledging that the true, real, genuine fellowship is based only upon Christ and found only in Christ.

Let me ask you a question: Why is it that we get along so well together? I don't have any problems with any of you, and I hope you don't have any problems with any of me. We fellowship together. We get along. We not only love each other; we like each other. Why? The

Bible says in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The only reason we can get along with each other, like each other, and love each other is because of Christ.

So it is a communion meal, as we fellowship with Him and with each other.

Sixth, it is a celebrational meal. The Lord took the bread, and what did He do? He gave thanks. He took the cup, and what did He do? He gave thanks. What does one do when he celebrates? He praises, honors, rejoices, and exalts.

The Lord's Supper as a Celebrational Meal

Usually, a celebration is carried on in a public manner. Thus, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are publicly honoring, worshiping, and praising Him and rejoicing in Him. You remember what our Lord told those Pharisees in John 8:56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." How did Abraham see the day of Christ? Only by faith, through the promises and through the prophecies. If Abraham, through the promises and prophecies, saw Christ's day and rejoiced, how much more should we rejoice, who have the fulfillment of those promises and prophecies?

We no longer have pictures; we now have the reality. We no longer have symbols; we have reality. The reality is in Christ Jesus, and what the Lord's Supper does is celebrate the gift of Christ. That is why the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:15 said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." He was referring to Jesus Christ.

Seventh, it is a pictorial meal. First Corinthians 11:26 says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The Lord's Supper is designed to show and to teach something: the Lord's death. It is to be a proper picture of the Lord's death.

The Lord's Supper as a Pictorial Meal

In order to be a proper picture, you must have the proper symbols, and it must be done in the proper way. The Lord's Supper is designed to show a picture of the death of Christ, His shed blood, and His broken body. When anyone sees or observes the Lord's Supper, what should he see? What should he observe? He should see and observe, pictorially, the death of Jesus Christ.

It is not only a celebrational meal; it is a pictorial meal. It is also a symbolical meal. What does that mean? It is a symbol of His presence. It is His supper. He is the host; He is the head. But He is present with us only symbolically and spiritually.

The Lord's Supper as a Symbolical Meal

Look in your Bibles to John chapter 14, verse 18: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." Skip down to verse 22: "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

How does Christ, and how does the Father, come to us? Spiritually, in the person and power of the Holy Spirit; symbolically, in the Lord's Supper, only as we perceive Him by faith alone.

The Eschatological Meal

The Lord's Supper is a symbolical meal. In emphasizing this, I am denying the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. They say their mystical rite turns the elements into His real blood and flesh. I deny that. Transubstantiation is not in the Word of God. That does not happen; they do not have mystical or magical powers. Christ is with us symbolically and spiritually, but He is not physically with us.

By saying that it is a symbolical meal, I am also denying the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, which teaches that Christ

comes with, in, and around the elements. No, He does not come with, in, and around the elements. I do not deny that Christ is present spiritually, really, and symbolically, but He is not present physically, and the elements do not become His actual blood and body. Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Thus, when we call the Lord's Supper a symbolical meal, we do so in contradistinction to the Catholics and Lutherans who teach otherwise.

The Lord's Supper as an Eschatological Meal

It is a celebrational meal, a pictorial meal, a symbolical meal, and finally, an eschatological meal. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:26: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death.” What are the last three words? “Till he come.” Eschatos is the Greek word for last. Eschatology is the doctrine of last things; it deals with death, judgment, and the return of Christ.

Amazingly, the Lord's Supper not only looks backward to what Christ has done; it also looks forward to what Christ will do. He is returning. He is coming back. Let us look at two passages, Acts 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1. He said, “Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” Now notice Acts 1:9: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

This is the ascension, when Christ ascends to the Father. A cloud received Him out of their sight. While they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, two men in white apparel said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” He went up bodily, literally, and visibly, and He is coming back bodily, literally, and visibly.

Second Thessalonians 1 tells us what will happen when He returns. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. Yet He shall come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.

The past, the present, and the future are all bound up in Jesus Christ, because in all things He must have the preeminence. When we observe the Lord's table, we are not merely pointing backward; we are also pointing forward. He said, "Ye do shew this My death, till I come." His return will be just as glorious, personal, real, and visible as His ascension. When He comes back, His return will end the need for all symbols and signs, because we will have Him.

He will come back to the consolation of His friends and the consternation of His enemies. We who believe will admire Him, glorify Him, and worship Him. But He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Supper is therefore an eschatological meal. It shows the Lord's death till He comes. It is said that when the Israelites observed the Passover, they always had one extra cup of wine set aside for the Messiah, because He could come and bring deliverance at any time. When we observe the Lord's Supper, we are saying this: the Messiah has already come. He has instituted this supper.

It is held in His honor and His glory, and we're doing this till He come again.

Applications

The significance of the Lord's Supper is monumental, and it should be grasped in some degree by each believer. The fact that there are numerous names and kinds of meals tied up in and inherent in the Lord's Supper should demonstrate its importance and encourage us to comprehend its implications. A proper understanding of the Lord's Supper should encourage each saint to stand fast and stand firm for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.

You know what the Lord's Supper is telling us? And you know what the Lord's Supper is telling everybody else? Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. He is salvation. There is salvation in no other. In this day of multiculturalism and pluralism, when everybody's trying to say that all religions are equal, no, the Lord's Supper stands out and says, no, they are not equal. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone is salvation. When we observe the Lord's table, we're saying

that everything is bound up in Him: past, present and future, life and death, salvation, condemnation; all is found in Him.

Let's pray. Father, we're so thankful for the Word of God and the teaching, Lord, that we have found in Thy Word. I pray that You would indeed help us to grasp the real significance of the Lord's table. May we remember what all is bound up in it. May we see how glorious Christ is, how wonderful His salvation. And may we celebrate it and glorify Thee in every area of our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Lord's Supper

Part Three

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 11:20-34 (KJV)

1 Corinthians 11:20-34:

“When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating everyone taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise you 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 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 broke 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 show 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 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."

Introduction and Review

> The Lord's Supper is an ordinance. It is a sovereign ordinance in the sense that the Lord Jesus himself ordained it. We call it a gospel ordinance because it symbolizes the gospel realities. There are basically only two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper.
>
> In our first lesson, we looked at the names given to the Lord's Supper: the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, Communion, the Cup of Blessing, the Cup of the Lord, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist. The term Eucharist simply refers to gratefulness and thankfulness.

It has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church or its teaching. The significance of the Lord's Supper can be seen in that, symbolically, it is a sacrificial meal. I always want to clarify that and say, I did not say it was a sacrifice, but it symbolizes a sacrificial meal. It is also a covenantal meal, a memorial meal, a commemorative meal, a communion meal, a celebrational meal, a pictorial meal, a symbolical meal, and lastly, an eschatological meal.

We have already looked at these things. Today we begin the third point by looking at the partakers. I will have to finish this point next week because I cannot cover all of it this week. Today we are dealing with the Lord's Supper and the partakers, although this is lesson number three, part one. Next week it will be lesson number four, part two.

As we talk about the partakers of communion, let me assure you that this is, in reality, one of the most controversial points in this series. It need not be, and it should not be, but I suppose there is probably only one other point in this entire series that will raise as many questions and emotions. That point will be when I get to the elements of the Lord's table.

The Controversy Over Partakers

Interestingly enough, the reason there is usually so much controversy about this is that individuals have embraced positions they have heard, been taught, or been raised in, and they have never studied anything out for themselves. Consequently, whenever they hear something new or different, there is inevitably a reaction.

It is not that there is any such thing as new truth. If truth is new, then it is not truth. But it may be new to us because we have never heard it before, never thought about it, and certainly never entertained it before. My purpose is not to alienate, disturb, or upset anyone, but to be as biblical and scriptural as possible. It is not my intent to destroy friendships, drive anyone away, make anyone mad, or deprive people of biblical blessings.

My intent is simply to be biblical and scriptural. The Bible says in Isaiah 8:20, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” It is my intent to speak according to this word and, in doing so, bring as many biblical blessings upon as many people as possible.

As I handle this particular point, the partakers, it is my intention to descend from the general to the particulars. Some of you have already asked me questions after the last two sessions, and some of those questions will be answered this week; some will be answered next week. But listen carefully as we discuss the partaker.

We have to ask this question: Who should partake of the Lord’s Supper? There has been a debate over this one simple question for centuries. I certainly do not take the position that I am the all-knowing one and that I am going to answer this debate for everyone. I know better than that. What I do want to accomplish is to answer this question, at least for this assembly. Or, secondly, I

want to provoke you to study so that you may help answer the question for this assembly. Who are the partakers in the Lord's Supper?

Four Positions on Communion

In a very general sense, there are only four possible positions. Many of you have never heard all of these positions before, but they are easily comprehended. What would be the first answer as to who should partake of communion? Number one, there is the position known as open communion. This position teaches that if anyone who is a Christian happens to be in the room when the Lord's Supper is being observed, he may simply partake.

In other words, church membership is not required, and baptism is not required. This position simply says that, as long as you are a professing Christian, it does not matter who you are, where you are from, what you are doing, what you believe, or how you are walking; if you are there, you may partake of communion. Some push this position to the nth degree and even say that the unsaved may partake. I certainly believe that anyone who would advocate that position is ignorant of Bible doctrine, but there are some who push it that far.

In order to answer the question, Who may partake? there are some who believe in what is known as open communion. The second position is restricted communion. Restricted communion restricts the observance of the Lord's Supper to believers only. This includes believers from other assemblies as well, from anywhere and everywhere. If you are a believer, you are entitled to partake. It is restricted to believers, which means that no unconverted people may partake. Thus, the only qualification in restricted communion is that you must be a believer.

The third position is known as closed communion. Closed communion says that communion is for all believers of like faith and practice who are in good standing with the church and sister churches of like faith and practice. For example, if you are a Primitive Baptist member of the church in Jessup and go to the Primitive Baptist Church in Scriven while they are observing the Lord's Table, you may partake, but only because you are a member

of a sister church of like faith and practice. If you are a Reformed Baptist or a Sovereign Grace Baptist and go there, you would not be allowed to partake, because communion is closed. It is only for those who are of like faith and practice in that church and in sister churches.

The fourth position is called close communion—not closed, but close communion. This position says that communion is for believers who are in good standing and are members of that particular assembly. All others are excluded, even those from sister churches with like faith and practice.

It does not matter whether you believe identically the same thing or not. Close communion is for those of us who are believers, who are members of this assembly, who attend here faithfully, and who have a godly and orderly life.

The practice of close communion is commonly charged with being unreasonable, unsociable, and bigoted. It is especially criticized in this ecumenical age, when doctrine does not matter to anyone and individual rights are elevated above doctrinal truth—individual rights even including the right to be wrong. Because of the unpopularity of close communion, it has sometimes been abandoned by denominational churches. However, the principles of Scripture teach, I believe, that close communion is indeed the biblical concept.

Close communion is practiced by many churches, not just Baptist churches. It is also practiced by the Lutherans, especially the Missouri Synod, and by the Presbyterians. Consider the position of the Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod.

Lutheran Practice and the Term 'Sacrament'

The Lutherans believe in consubstantiation, while Roman Catholics believe in transubstantiation. The difference is minor in one sense and major in another. Roman Catholics say that when they pronounce their incantation over the bread and wine, the bread actually becomes the body of Christ and the wine actually becomes the blood of Christ. The Lutherans do not believe in transubstantiation; they believe in consubstantiation. They say that

Christ comes with, in, under, and around the bread and wine. This is their position concerning close communion:

"As a member congregation of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, we confess with the Saints of all ages that in the Holy Supper, Jesus Christ comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sin and the strengthening of faith."

The Missouri Synod explains its practice this way: "We practice close communion as an expression of our unity in doctrine, believing that when individuals partake of the sacrament of the altar, they are at the same time making confession of their agreement with the doctrines of the hosting congregation or church body. Because most denominations no longer believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine, but confess that he is only present in a symbolical or representative way, we cannot expect others to make such a commitment, nor do we want anyone to compromise their own conscience and the teachings of their home church. Therefore, our practice of close communion admits only those in doctrinal agreement with the confessions of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod."

Notice what they are saying. One reason they practice close communion is that they want everyone to agree with their doctrine. They do not expect those who have never been taught by them, and those who are not one of them, to agree with this doctrine. Therefore, they are not going to ask anyone to compromise his conscience or to lie. They are simply saying, This is for our church; this is for our believers. If you are one of us, you may partake, but if you are not one of us, you may not partake. Lutherans, then, believe in consubstantiation, and the Missouri Synod does not want anyone to partake who is not one of their own.

Some churches refer to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament. The Lutherans sometimes use that term, but chiefly the Roman Catholics do. Other people use it as well, including some Baptists and Presbyterians.

I have problems with that word, and I am going to explain why. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there are seven sacraments. The Greek Orthodox Church does not use the word

sacrament, but uses the word mystery; it also teaches that there are seven mysteries, which would be the same as the seven sacraments. Some Protestant churches, as well as Baptists, teach that there are only two: baptism and communion. The Mormon Church teaches that there is only one sacrament, which is communion. Of course, I believe its use of the word sacrament is something totally different from the definition most churches would place upon it.

The word sacrament comes to us from the Latin language. If you try to find its origin, you will encounter several explanations. Some say it signifies an oath that the military gave at enlistment. Others say its origin signified a deposit set aside by two parties who were in dispute.

Neither one of these usages, I believe, corresponds to the religious usage today of a sacrament. I have a problem with the word because the Roman Catholic Church teaches that a sacrament is a means of acquiring grace through a ritual prescribed by the church.

The faith of the person administering the sacrament, nor the faith of the person receiving it, has anything to do with it. They say it is valid because church rituals are being observed. Whether you were a believer or not is immaterial. You can find this in the decree of the Council of Trent, Canon 7. A sacrament is a means by which you acquire grace. You go through the ritual, regardless of whether you are a man of faith, and grace is given to you.

The Lutheran Church teaches the same thing. Listen to this statement from the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod: "As a member congregation of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, we confess with the saints of all ages that in the Holy Supper, Jesus Christ comes to us in, with and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins."

And the strengthening of our faith. What are they saying? They are saying it is a ritual, a ceremony by which you acquire grace, especially the grace of forgiveness.

When you hear the word sacrament, the average person, or at least I do, automatically thinks of the Roman Catholic Church. I do not think of a Baptist church or a Presbyterian church; I think of a

Roman Catholic church. I hesitate to use that word because of the unbiblical connotation usually associated with it.

Historically, Baptists have practiced either closed communion or close communion. It has only been in recent times that open or restricted communion has come into vogue. William Cathcart's book, The Baptist Encyclopedia, volume 1, page 257, says: "The practice of open or restricted communion is of comparatively recent origin, and its history presents little to recommend it."

The Lord's Supper as a Church Ordinance

It seems to have been a natural outgrowth of persecuting times when the people of God were few in number and were compelled to worship in secret places, and when the preservation of the fundamentals of divine truth made men blind to grave errors that were regarded not as soul-destroying. In the first half of the seventeenth century, it made its appearance in England.

This means that open and restricted communion probably came into vogue when believers were few, when they were being persecuted and had to hide, and when they gathered to observe the Lord's table without necessarily pressing every doctrine or counting certain errors as soul-destroying. They simply went ahead with it. Robert Hall, an English Baptist who lived from 1764 to 1831, helped promote open communion. We have spoken of open communion, restricted communion, closed communion, and close communion.

To determine which of these is the biblical concept, we need to examine a number of principles in Scripture. It would be easy if we could turn to a chapter and verse that said, "Thou shalt practice closed or open restricted communion." But the Bible says it is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the honor of kings to search it out. Although there may not be a distinct verse saying, "Thou shalt practice closed or close communion," there are principles that are very plain and evident in the Bible.

Biblical Principles for Close Communion

First of all, the Lord's Supper, as is baptism, is a church ordinance. By that statement, I mean that the ordinance is given to the church as a local institution.

God created only three institutions: the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and the civil government of the state, which is a ministry of justice. He did not give communion to the family, and He did not give communion to the state. The only one to which He gave communion and baptism was the church. Why do you not see parachurch organizations or individuals going around serving and observing the Lord's Supper? The answer is simple: God gave the ordinance to the church as an institution. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were never given to the individual, nor were they given to the state.

In Matthew 28 we find the Great Commission. Our Lord is speaking to His disciples, to the apostles. Beginning with verse 18, He says, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He then says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

At the ascension, they were standing there watching our Lord. Before He ascended into heaven, He gave the Great Commission and told them to baptize and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded. Now look at Ephesians chapter 2, and particularly verse 20. In fact, we will read verse 19 so you will see that he is talking about the saints, about believers: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

What is he telling us? The teaching of the apostles is the foundation stone of the church. They were the representatives of the church. That is why Acts 2:42 says of the early church, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." We read this, I believe, last week, but look at it again. Why did they continue steadfastly in the

apostles' doctrine? Because the apostles were the foundation stone of the church. That is what he is saying in Ephesians chapter 2. Of course, the great foundation stone is none other than Jesus Christ.

But the apostles and prophets are only as they preached and taught Jesus Christ. Would you not think it odd if you went down to the local YMCA and saw the women's missionary organization serving communion? Of course you would. What if you saw the Royal Ambassadors, which is the little boys in the Baptist denomination, the Southern Baptist denomination, serving communion at a youth camp? Would it not be odd? Of course you would. Why would you think it would be odd?

The Gathered Church

Because the Lord's Supper was given to the church as an institution, it was not given to a parachurch organization. That is why you do not go into private homes and see people serving communion there, unless a home church is meeting there. It was never given to individuals or to parachurch organizations. So the Lord's Supper, as is baptism, is an ordinance—period—a church ordinance.

Secondly, here is the second principle: the Lord's Supper is an ordinance for the gathered, or assembled, church. It is not only a church ordinance; it is an ordinance for the gathered or assembled church. The Lord's Supper is not for the unsaved. It is not just for family members or friends. Listen carefully: it is not even for the sick and bedridden who happen to be members of the local church.

Scripture knows nothing of a carry-out service or drive-through communion service. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul gives a greeting in 1 Corinthians 1:1: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, who happened to be with Paul, unto the church of God which is at Corinth."

To whom is this epistle addressed? To the local church that is at Corinth.

Now look in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and look in verse 18. This is still in the same context of the Lord's Supper: "For first of all, when ye come together in the church..." That is where they were having the

love feast, and that is also where they were having the Lord's Supper. They were gathering there at the church. Where is the Lord's Supper observed? At the local church.

You say, “Pastor, I know of some churches that have a carry-out communion service to the sickly and the bedridden.” May I ask why a church might have a carry-out service to the sickly and the bedridden? It is only when you turn the Lord’s Supper into a sacrament—and by that word I mean a means of obtaining or acquiring grace—that you give it to the sickly and the dying. In other words, if you believe in salvation by works, or by rituals and ceremonies, then you would carry it out to those who are sickly and dying. But if you believe in salvation only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, there is not going to be a carry-out service. Why do you think Roman Catholics have the Lord’s Supper as a sacrament? Because it is a means of obtaining grace. When somebody is dying, they will give that person the sacrament and then have last rites.

If you understand this, you can see that not only is the Lord’s Supper a church ordinance, but it is also restricted to the local assembled church. This would also include what you and I would call paedo-communion. A lot of people want to give communion to infants and young children. Why would you give the Lord’s Supper to someone who cannot even perceive its significance unless you believe it is a means of acquiring grace?

Number three, the observance of the Lord’s Supper is to be under the discipline of the local church. This point should be obvious and clear. Those members who are not in good standing, those who are under church discipline, should not be permitted to partake of the Lord’s Supper. That is simple. Let me show you the Scriptures. Let us go to Matthew 18 first and lay out the biblical principle. Matthew 18, verse 15. What does the Lord say?

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." We're talking about church discipline now.

"But if he neglect to hear the church," that is, if he still will not repent, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Are unsaved people supposed to eat the Lord's Supper? No. If someone will not repent and will not do right, although he is a professing believer, and you execute church discipline upon him, he is to be barred from the Lord's table. He cannot partake. The observance of the Lord's table, then, has to be under the control of the local assembly.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Not fellowship with them, but avoid them. If someone is promoting doctrinal error and heresy, what does the Apostle Paul say? Mark them. Have nothing to do with them. Avoid them. Does that mean allowing them to sit down at the Lord's table with you? Of course not.

Paul explains why those who cause divisions must be avoided: “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” He gives the same instruction in 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

Then, in verse 14, he says, “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” Isn’t that amazing? He says you cannot have any company with him, that he might be ashamed.

If you could not fellowship with him in his home, do you think you could fellowship with him around the Lord’s table? No. He says not to count him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. Still, there has to be some type of order.

First Corinthians 5 gives us a classic illustration. The Lord’s Supper was given as an ordinance to the church. Secondly, it was given to the assembled or gathered church. Thirdly, it has to be under the discipline of the church. Here was a serious problem: “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such

fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

Evidently—and I do not know—this was not necessarily a case of incest. I think this was probably the boy's stepmother. Evidently, he and the father were having relations with the same woman. What does Paul say to these Corinthians? "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Paul is writing to the church. They were proud of their liberty and their non-condemnatory attitude, but he said they should be mourning: "that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together," that is, when you come to the local assembly, "and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good."

"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Paul continued, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators." He clarified that he did not mean the fornicators of this world, or those who are lost and heathen, nor the covetous, extortioners, and idolaters; otherwise believers would have to leave the world, because such people are everywhere. But he said, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

What is the Apostle Paul doing? He is showing church discipline. In verse 12, he speaks about judging those who are within; in other words, we have to judge each other. Verse 11 speaks about not eating with them.

Suppose Don was running around on Joyce. I would not really have to worry about not eating with him because Joyce would kill him, but that is all right, too. But let us suppose he was, and we knew about it as a church. We said nothing to him, acted as if nothing had happened, and observed the Lord's table. Then he comes along and says, "Well, I am going to partake, too." What are we doing? We are violating 1 Corinthians chapter five. If God would forbid me simply to go out and eat a meal with him and pretend that everything was hunky-dory, how much more would God forbid me to partake of the Lord's table with him?

He speaks of judging those who are within. This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. That is why, in verse 7, he speaks of purging out the old leaven, and in verse 13 plainly says, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Here is a man who professed to be a brother while doing those things. That is what Paul is saying. Paul is not speaking of the unsaved out there—the adulterers, whoremongers, covetous, and liars. You expect such things of the unsaved, and you can avoid them. But if any man who is called a brother does these things, "with such an one no not to eat."

It should be obvious to anyone who reads the Scripture that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, restricted to the local gathered church. The church must have control over the table in such a way as to exclude the disorderly and unrepentant; therefore, it is coextensive with church discipline. According to the command of the Lord, the pattern of apostolic example, and the history of the church, communion was always observed in the context of a local gathered assembly and under the discipline of the church.

If the church has the right, duty, obligation, and power to exclude someone from the Lord's Supper, that person must be excludable. Therefore, it is coextensive with church discipline.

Now, therefore, let me give you this. There are at least, I believe, four prerequisites to observing the Lord's Supper in order to partake. We are going to get more particular next week, but these are four general principles. What are the four general principles? The first is salvation, or conversion. The Lord's Supper is not for the unsaved.

Four Prerequisites for Partaking

Now, I am not a paedobaptist; I do not believe in baptizing infants. Nor am I a paedocommunionist. I do not believe in giving the Lord's table to babies and small children.

You remember when Philip was witnessing to the Ethiopian eunuch in the book of Acts. The eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" What would hinder me? What is stopping me from being baptized? You remember what Philip said? "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." What was the requirement to be baptized? Believing with all your heart.

Let me ask you a question. If that is a requirement to be baptized, how can it not be a requirement to partake of the Lord's Supper? What kind of significance could the Lord's Supper have to someone who is unconverted, does not understand it, and cannot understand it? I have had people ask me, joking with them, "Would you baptize the baby?" I said, "I will baptize anybody who can believe with all of his heart." But I believe that is a requirement.

I do not fall out with someone who necessarily holds an opposite opinion. I understand the Presbyterian position of the covenant. Rushdoony was one of my dearest friends. Everybody knows that. I spent time with him, he preached in our church, I preached out there, and I studied with him. I love him. But I told him one day, "Rush, I don't understand how anybody can be so brilliant as you and know so much and be so wrong on baptism."

Of course, he just laughed and said, "Well, I could say the same thing about you, Baptist." Rush was a Presbyterian. But I am simply pointing out 1 Thessalonians 1:9: "How ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." What is required? The first requirement should be conversion. It should be salvation. I believe

salvation is an absolute prerequisite. It is necessary to partake of the Lord's Supper; it cannot have any meaning for you if you are not saved.

Look in your Bibles to John chapter 13. Our Lord established the Lord's Supper. We will begin reading with verse 24: "Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake." Our Lord had just said that one of them would betray Him.

Out of the original twelve disciples, were all of them believers? No. Who was the real unbeliever? Judas. Jesus had already said, “One of you is going to betray me.” John 13:24 says, “Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.”

“No man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

The reason for reading this passage is that when you read Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22, which refer to the Lord's Supper, it seems as if Judas is there. But in John 13, they have finished the Passover meal. Our Lord gives him the sop, and when he receives it, the Bible says he goes immediately out.

What does that tell us? The Lord instituted His Supper without Judas present. Judas had left. He was the one who was not saved; he was excluded. First Corinthians 11:30 indicates that the Lord's Supper was established while Judas was actually out betraying Christ. The reference is 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.” The same night in which

He was betrayed: the betrayal was going on while Jesus Christ was instituting the Lord's Supper. Very clearly, when our Lord instituted it, He excluded Judas.

So I believe, first of all, the first prerequisite is salvation. You must be a believer in order to partake. The second requirement, I believe, is baptism. Baptism is antecedent to the Lord's Supper; that is, it occurs prior to taking the Lord's Supper. Why? Because baptism is the initial confession of faith. Look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 6 and verse 12. The interesting thing about this verse is that it does not matter whether you read an Arminian or a Calvinistic commentary. All commentaries will basically say the same thing about this verse. Paul is telling Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." Every commentator will tell you that the good profession which Timothy made before so many witnesses was at his baptism. Baptism is the initial act of obedience. It is the initial confession of faith.

Those of you who have been baptized must remember that you confessed and acknowledged that Jesus Christ is Lord. When you stop and think of the two ordinances that God has given to the local church—baptism and the Lord's Supper—it is only natural that baptism precedes the Lord's Supper because of the pictures that they present. What does baptism picture? That we have died to our sins and died to ourselves, and that we are raised anew in newness of life to follow Jesus Christ. What does the Lord's Supper picture? That we are feeding upon Christ, that we are being nourished and sustained by Him, and that we are living upon Him. You have to have life before life can be continued and sustained. These two pictures show very clearly that baptism should be a prerequisite because it is the initiation and the original confession that, yes, I believe in Jesus Christ.

So you can say that there is salvation, there is baptism, and thirdly, there is church membership. If the Lord's Supper is given to the church as an ordinance, and if it is served in the context of the local assembly, it would then be for those who are in fellowship with that assembly and under the discipline of that assembly.

Suppose we are observing the Lord's Supper, and someone comes in wanting to partake. We do not know who he is or anything about him; he may be a believer. But how can I exclude someone who is not excludable? How can I discipline someone over whom I have no authority? I have no authority over someone who comes here once a year, so to speak.

Consider this also: suppose someone comes to partake of the Lord's Supper while being disciplined by the church where he is a member. We would then be violating Scripture if we observed the Lord's table with him, for the Lord said, "with such an one no not to eat." If you look at the principles of Scripture, the only position you can come to is that of close communion.

It is for those who are regenerated, those who have been baptized, and those who are fellowshipping under the authority of that local assembly. The fourth requirement is a godly, or orderly, life. Just because you are a Christian, have been baptized, and are associated with a local fellowship does not mean that you therefore have a godly and orderly life. The man in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 was a member of that assembly, a professed believer, and probably had been baptized, but he certainly did not have a godly and orderly life.

That is why Paul said, "put that wicked one out from among you," and, "with such an one no not to eat." In Acts 21:24, they told the apostle Paul, "Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." They were telling Paul to do this so everybody would know that he was living an orderly and obedient life. Very obviously, you must have an orderly and obedient life to partake of the Lord's Supper.

The four basic requirements are salvation, baptism, church membership, and an orderly and godly life. Even if you have those four, there are still other requirements, based upon 1 Corinthians 11. If you do not follow them, you partake in an unworthy manner, the Bible says, and bring condemnation upon yourself.

Applications

Applications and Conclusion

The first application is to those who are unsaved. If you are not saved, whenever you observe the Lord's Supper, you ought to see that Jesus Christ died for sinners and calls people to repentance and faith. In other words, you are to remember that Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the bread of life. There is no life apart from Christ. Every time you see the Lord's Supper, it ought to remind you that God commands you to repent and believe on Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper can therefore be a tool of evangelism, in the sense that we understand Christ, and Christ alone, is salvation.

The second application is to the saints. If you have not been baptized since you believed, you need to be. I exhort you to follow the teaching of Scripture. Baptism is the first act, the first step, of obedience. That is what our Lord said: make disciples, baptize them, and then teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Baptism is the first open public confession of faith that an individual makes when he says that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Thirdly, if you are a saint and have been baptized, make sure that you live an orderly and godly life and walk in the precepts of the Word of God, so that there will not be any hindrance or interference in observing and partaking of the Lord's Supper. This can also be an incentive to make sure that we walk wholly and obediently.

Let's pray. Father, we are so thankful today for the word of God, for the principles in it, and for the teaching of it. Father, we ask that you help us submit to it, surrender to it, and love it and obey it. We do pray for orderly lives and godly lives, and that you would make us holy. May we be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Lord's Supper

Part Four

First Corinthians 11, verse 20: "When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 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 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 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."

Introduction and Review

We've seen that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance. It is called a sovereign ordinance since God Himself ordained it. It is called a gospel ordinance because it portrays the realities of the gospel. There are only two ordinances like this in the Bible. They are baptism and the Lord's Supper. We've looked at the names that have been given to the Lord's Supper in the Bible, and they are the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, communion, the cup of blessing, the cup of the Lord, the breaking of bread, and Eucharist. The word Eucharist just simply means to be thankful, to be grateful. The Lord's Supper symbolizes a sacrificial meal; it is not a sacrificial meal in and of itself. It is a covenantal meal, a memorial meal, a commemorative meal, a communion meal, a celebrational meal, a pictorial meal, a symbolical meal, and finally an eschatological meal.

And when you look at all of those together, you understand the importance and the significance of it. We have seen, first of all, that the Lord's Supper was given to the church. That is, it was given as a church ordinance. And secondly, it was given to the assembled local church.

The Lord's Supper was given to the local church; you do not see private individuals and private families in their homes observing it. Certainly it would be all right to have the Lord's Supper in a home if that's where the church is meeting because that's where the early church met, in the homes. But I was talking about individual families

and not just the local assembly as such that was meeting there. It was also given to the church in the context of church discipline. That is, the church had to have the authority to exclude those who were unrepentant and disorderly.

There are four prerequisites for observing the Lord's Supper. And they were, first of all, salvation, secondly, baptism, thirdly, church membership, and fourthly, an orderly life.

According to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, there's even more that would be required of a Christian than those four things. First Corinthians 11, verses 30 and 31 say, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Obviously, there were some individuals who were partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, and they were bringing upon themselves judgment and condemnation.

Four Additional Requirements from 1 Corinthians 11

Salvation, baptism, church membership and an orderly life are the basics, the prerequisites. But the scripture gives us at least four other points that we must consider. Verses 27 and 29 say:

"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." Verse 29, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." So the first requirement beyond the four basic prerequisites is this, that Christians are not to partake of the Lord's table unworthily. Verse 28 gives the second requirement: "But let a man examine himself." That is, Christians must examine themselves. Thirdly, verse 29 says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, not discerning the Lord's body." Thirdly, Christians must discern the Lord's body. And then verse 31, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." And the fourth point is that Christians must judge themselves. So here are four additional requirements. Christians are not to partake of the supper unworthily. We are to examine ourselves. We are to discern the Lord's body and we're to judge ourselves.

The question is, Are these four requirements identical? Are they different? Or are they just simply interrelated? Certainly, all of these things are interrelated. And yes, there are occasions when they are basically the same, and yet there are differences. First, Christians are not to partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily. Verse 27: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily." And then he says the same thing in verse 29. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily."

Partaking in a Worthy Manner

The word worth indicates a certain value. And that value is attached to the meal. So he then who partakes of the Lord's Supper without recognizing its value or its worth is partaking then unworthily. We must not give the Lord's Supper a value that God himself does not give it. By that I mean this, we must not use the Lord's Supper superstitiously, or we must not view it as some magical incantation, or we must not view it as some means of acquiring grace as if it was a work that helped us earn or merit either forgiveness or salvation. But on the other hand, we must not devalue or undervalue the Lord's Supper either. We dare not diminish its worth. In other words, we must place the same value and the same worth upon the Lord's table that God Himself does.

Verse 27 says, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily." The word unworthily is very significant. What happens is this. Most people try to interpret verse 27 and verse 29 to refer to their personal qualifications or rather to their unfitness to partake of the Lord's table or not. Understand that the word unworthily is an adverb and not an adjective. So what verse 27 and verse 29 is doing is this. It is describing a manner in which the Lord's table must not be observed. It has nothing to do with our personal fitness to receive the Lord's table or not. In other words, it deals with the manner of observing the ordinance. The truth of the matter is this. If you want to deal with personal fitness, we are all unworthy of salvation. We're all unworthy of any grace. We're all unworthy of any mercy.

But that's not what it's referring to. It's referring to the manner in which the Lord's table is observed. He that eateth and drinketh

unworthily. So it's not dealing with personal qualifications. It's only dealing with the manner in which it is observed. I've only known of one man in my entire life who is a professing Christian man, and he probably was. He's a very meek man, a very gentle man, but he would never partake of the Lord's table. And I asked him one day, why? And his answer was this. "I'm so unworthy." I looked at him and I said, "Well, so am I. But Christ makes us worthy. It has nothing to do with our personal fitness or personal qualification. This passage, which he misinterpreted, has to deal with the manner of observing the Lord's Supper." So, yes, we can come to the Lord's Supper with a deep sense of our sinfulness and our need and recognition of the Savior and with some just views of the Lord's Supper, but it deals with the manner and not our unfitness. So whatever our consciousness is of our sins, and of our unworthiness, and I'm not going to say that that cannot be too deep. The problem is most of the time it's not deep enough. Yet, such is our love for Christ and such is our attitude that should be biblical and godly, no matter how unworthy we are, we may partake of it in a worthy manner. Remember, it deals with the manner of partaking and not with our personal fitness. There are several ways it may be partaken in an unworthy manner.

There could be an indecent observance of the Lord's Supper, such as at the Church of Corinth. But in the context, one of their problems was gluttony and insensitivity, intemperance and unconcern for the brethren. That was one way in which they partook unworthily. Another one is when there was no distinction between what would be a common meal and a holy meal. That's exactly what they were doing here. They had their agape meal, or their love feast, and they had it intermingled in with the Lord's Supper, and there was no discernment between that which would be common and that which would be holy.

And thus they were partaking then in an unworthy manner. And you could also say when it is done for mockery, and for the purpose of deriding Christ and Christianity, or the ordinances of the gospel. Even in witchcraft, they mock the Lord's table and deride it. There have been noted infidels that would pervert it and mock it. And they did so gladly because they hated Christ so much. There is nothing that will make manifest more the hatred of men's hearts for Christ

and the gospel than their hostility and their mockery of the Lord's table. I might point out that some who began by mocking the Lord's table probably also ended up converted later on as well. It's like two of the infidels who began to try to prove that Christ did not exist and that Christ was not God. And as they wrote their book and did their investigation, one of them became convicted and then converted and became a wonderful godly man because he realized that yes, Christianity was indeed true.

But here's another thing. We must not descend to the state where we view the Lord's Supper as a ritual or ceremony or an empty waste of time. We cannot view it as common or insignificant and meaningless. When we do so, we're going to partake of it in an unworthy manner. So when he says in verse 27, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily," this means: to eat and drink unworthily then would be to pervert the pure and right use of it by our abuse of the supper. When we abuse it, when we pervert it, when we misuse the right use, then we're eating and drinking unworthily. Now, in the immediate context, to eat and drink unworthily would be to eat and drink as the Corinthians did, who did not eat and drink in reference to Jesus Christ and his sacrificial meal, or any sacrificial life and death.

God sovereignly, graciously and mercifully delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. Exodus chapter 12 and John chapter 2 demonstrate the point. And they put the blood on the doorpost and he said, "When I see the blood, I'll pass over you." In Exodus 12 and verse 11, he told those Israelites, "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover." It is the Lord's Passover.

In other words, here is an institution in the Old Testament that was ordained by God to commemorate the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt. It was something to be special and holy. John 2, verse 13 shows what the Lord's Passover descended into: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Now, whose Passover is it in John chapter 2? The Jews'. Whose Passover was it when it was initiated? The Lord's. Now it's descended to the Jews' Passover. What's that mean? It's descended

into nothing more than a ritual and a ceremony and something that you have to do and something that you just go through to be going through it. So what started out as something that God ordained has now ended up as something that man does, and you're expected to do it because this is our Passover.

In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 16, the Bible in talking about Esau says, "Lest there be any profane person among you, as Esau." The word profane comes from the Latin. Pro is a preposition which means to or toward and fanum is the Latin word for temple. So a profane person is someone who is facing to or toward the temple. What's that mean? That means he's outside of the temple. What is a profane person? Not someone necessarily who curses and takes God's name in vain or uses slang incessantly. A profane person is someone who lives as if God does not exist or that God has not spoken or that God has no control or authority over his life. In other words, he lives independently of God. Well, how can you profane the Lord's temple?

The answer is very easy: by counting it as common, by making it into a ritual or ceremony or something that is hollow and has no meaning to it. God forbade this in the law of Moses. Ezekiel 22, verse 26 shows why God condemned the priests. He had told them to put a difference between the holy and the profane. So in Ezekiel 22 and verse 26, when God condemns the priest, he says this, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." So one of the ways then that you abuse and misuse and pervert the Lord's Supper is simply by counting it basically as a ritual, a ceremony, something we've got to do, something we just go through, hollow, meaningless.

And therefore, when we do that with our attitude, we are partaking of it in an unworthy manner. First Corinthians 11, verse 27 says, "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." When you partake in an unworthy manner, then he says you shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

Guilt of the Body and Blood of the Lord

What does that mean? The Greek word for guilty is enochos, which literally means to be in danger, to be guilty of, and when it is used in a forensic sense, it denotes the connection of the person with his crime, or with the penalty of that crime, or with that against whom he has offended. So, what he is saying is that you have offended the Lord, you have committed a crime or sin, and there is going to be a penalty attached to that crime or that sin. So the phrase then, "shall be guilty of the body and blood of Christ," means that if one uses the Lord's Supper irreverently, if he denies the truth that Christ suffered unjustly, he then in effect joins issue or joins with the Jews in their condemnation and crucifixion of Christ himself.

You remember there when Pilate said, "I find no fault in him." And what did the Jews cry out? "His blood be on us, and on our children." "Crucify him. Crucify him." That's bad company to be in.

Some would go on to say that the word guilty then would refer to the penalty of partaking unworthily. And that penalty is given to you in verse 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." When one desecrates the symbol, he desecrates that which the symbol represents.

Thus, to trample our flag insults our countrymen. Does it not make your blood boil even to see in the South our Confederate flag hated, mocked, ridiculed, despised? Well, of course it does. Why? Because that's an affront to our ancestors and those who fought and bled and died and for what they stood for. Well, if we're going to get our blood boiling over our flag, how about getting our blood boiling over the abuse and misuse and slander against Jesus Christ. This verse is dealing with the fact that you cannot irreverently and unworthily partake and escape the consequences of it. John Trapp, one of the old scholars, said: "Because they profane the holy symbols and pledges of Christ's blessed body and blood, these are in some sense as guilty as those that spit upon Christ's face or that spilt his blood."

You remember how those Jews mocked him and ridiculed him and spat upon him when he was hanging on the cross? What does Trapp say? Trapp says when you abuse and pervert the symbols of

Christ, it is as if you were there spitting upon Him and spilling His blood. There is a biblical attitude and a biblical manner that must be adhered to in the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

We cannot come to it flippantly and irreverently, unthinkingly. No. We've got to make sure that when we partake, it is in a worthy manner. And remember the adverb unworthily does not refer to our persons, but to the manner in which Lord's Supper is observed.

Self-Examination

Secondly, if you look in verse 28, Christians must examine themselves. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." What does that mean? That means before we partake, there must be self-examination.

The Greek word dokimazo means to examine so as to approve.

Paul is demanding here that each person, before he partakes of the Lord's Supper, prove himself, that he sift out the wrong attitudes and the wrong thinking and anything that is evil, and he does so, so that he may be proved or approved. Second Corinthians 13, verse 5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Notice, examine yourselves. And then he says, prove your own selves. What in the world is he demanding when he says prove your own selves?

Well, dokimazo implies a special kind of proving. The special kind of proving that this word suggests is that you test or try or examine yourself so that the result will be good. In other words, the purpose of doing this self-examination is not to keep you away from the Lord's table, but so that you may be sure that you come to it in the right manner. In other words, the result is good. So this act of examining then that Paul is commanding cannot ever be used to say, well, it's leading me away from the Lord's table. No, it's not. It's leading you to the Lord's table. It's just telling you when you come, you must come in the worthy manner and you're examining yourself to make sure that you prove yourself.

Yes, I do have an understanding. Yes, I do have the biblical attitude. Yes, I'm not using this unreverently or irreverently and

unthinkingly. No, I'm coming the way God commands me to come. So the examination, then, is that which would clear us so that we may partake in a worthy manner. Naturally, when we examine ourselves, we would have to deal with what you and I would say are our known sins. We must deal with our known sins. We cannot approach an ordinance which pictures our deliverance from sin with known sin in our lives.

How could you do that? What does David say in Psalm 66 and verse 18? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

If God will not hear our prayer, if we come to Him with known sin and iniquity and rebellion in our hearts, how much more is He going to judge us if we come to His table, which pictures deliverance from our sins by the death of His Son, and we come there knowingly holding known sin and rebellion? What does 1 John 1:9 say?

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That means if I come to partake of the Lord's Supper, I say, "Oh, I remember fussing at Alice this morning. I ought not to have done that. Lord, please forgive me. Alice, please forgive me." I'm dealing with that sin. "Well, I'm mad at Dr. Holmes. He did it again." No. "Well, Lord, forgive me for my madness. Doc, please forgive me of my madness." You're dealing honestly with your sins. And when you confess them, when you acknowledge them, He's faithful and just to cleanse us from all our sins so that we may partake in a holy and righteous manner.

When the Bible tells us that we are to examine ourselves, the examination is not to disbar or disjoin us from partaking. It is to prepare us in order that we may partake in a worthy manner. Thirdly, verse 29 says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." That means this, we must discern the Lord's body. Actually, verse 29 assigns the reason as to why we must examine ourselves in verse 28. Why? So that we make sure that we discern the Lord's body. Because he that eateth and drinketh to himself unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation or damnation. In verse 29, the

word damnation, the Greek word is krima, which just simply means judgment, condemnation, or damnation.

Discerning the Lord's Body

It does not have the definite article in front of it, and it does not refer to final perdition. Rather, all it is saying is this. If we partake unworthily, we're actually condemning ourselves. We are bringing ourselves under judgment. What kind of judgment? Verse 30 says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

In other words, those who partake wrongly of the Lord's supper, those who partake unworthily, many times are judged by God and they have physical sickness, physical weakness, and many sleep. What's that mean? They died. Sleep is a euphemistic term for death. You remember the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 14, "And them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Most of us have never attached physical sickness and even death to a wrong-taking of the Lord's Supper. And yet that's exactly what this verse is saying. The Bible says in 1 John 5, there is a sin unto death. Therefore, he says, we must discern the Lord's body.

Why did they eat and drink unworthily? They did not discern the Lord's body.

The word discern is the Greek word diakrino, which literally means to separate, to distinguish, or to cut through. Basically, it is used in two ways. First, it is used in the sense of discriminating one thing from another. And second, it is used in the sense of estimating aright. So when you read that in verse 29, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, not estimating aright the Lord's body" or "not discerning the Lord's body," that is separating it as a difference between a common meal and a holy meal and a special meal that's been ordained by God. So, therefore, to discern the Lord's body in one sense of the word would be equated with receiving it in a worthy manner. If you do not discern the Lord's body, then you are partaking in an unworthy manner. When you discern the Lord's body, you are partaking in a worthy manner.

Not only must we discern the Lord's body, not only must we examine ourselves, but Scripture says that we must partake of it in a worthy manner. Fourthly, verse 31 says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." So that means, fourthly, Christians must judge themselves. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." What does that mean?

Judging Ourselves

In reality, it means we don't have any choice of the matter. We will either judge ourselves or God will judge us. We're going to be judged one way or the other. Now, the easy way out is to judge yourself. The word judged in verse 31 is the same word that is translated discern in verse 29. So literally, he says, if we would discern ourselves, we should not be discerned by God. In other words, if we give a right estimate of ourselves, we're not going to be discerned by God as being sinful and wicked and approaching the table in an irreverent manner.

So we must judge or discern the Lord's body, and as we judge and discern the Lord's body, we must also judge and discern ourselves. So once again it means this, that any unbiblical attitudes must be dealt with. Any unbiblical actions must be dealt with. Any sins, any rebellion must be dealt with. In other words, if we do not judge them, God will. Now, if God judges us upon our refusal to do so, why would God do that?

Verse 32 says, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord." Why? "That we should not be condemned with the world."

As a Christian, had you rather have a little spanking or final destruction? I don't know about you, but I'll take the little spanking. But the truth of the matter is, I don't really want the little spanking. I had enough of those when I was a child. I tell people we had a peach tree out behind our house and they never did bloom till after I left home. Never had any limbs on it.

But when God does judge us, he chastens us. Verse 32 says, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord." The word chastened means child-trained. "But when we are judged of God, we are child-trained of the Lord."

Hebrews 12 is the classic passage on child-training. Every time you see the word chastening or chastened, it deals with child training. It's the same Greek word, child training. Verse 5: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." There are a number of things that God points out about His child training here.

First of all, He tells us not to faint. He tells us not to fall out over this child training. He tells us that everyone who is genuinely saved, genuinely converted is child trained. There is no Christian that escapes child training. He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, then God dealeth with you as with sons. Then he said, if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Now, why does God chasten us?

He said that we might not be condemned with the world. That's true, but there's more to it than that. Verse 9 says, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." I found out when I was a boy, there's two ways that you can whip a child. You can whip him just enough to make him mad at you and he'll hate you. Or you can take a limb and beat the devil out of him and he'll love you. I'm serious about that. Think about the whippings that you got as a child. Those little fanny slaps with the palm of the hand, they just irritated you. They just made you mad.

But when that dad got that belt or that switch and wore you out, it broke your heart. I've never smoked. But when I was seven years old,

I thought I wanted to. And I stole some of my father's cigarettes. And I went around behind the house, and I was smoking me a cigarette. And my sister came around and saw me. Well, you know how sisters are.

She had to go tell Daddy. Well, Daddy was kind of a hypocrite about it, because it was his cigarettes. Hey, but you were smoking too, you know. But boy, when he came around the corner of that house, I never will forget how he whipped me. The sad thing is, he didn't just whip me one time. He'd go off and start thinking about getting mad and come back and whip me again.

I don't even remember how many whippings I got that day. I know five or six. But when I got to be 16, of course Daddy had quit smoking by then, but when I got to be 16 he said, "Son if you want to smoke go ahead." I said, "No thank you sir. I don't think I want any more of those things." I didn't appreciate those five or six whippings that day, but I do today and I'm really thankful.

Hebrews 12, verse 9 says, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." What did I do? I submitted. I said, "All right, dad, you're right. No more cigarettes for me, OK?" I gave him reverence. I submitted. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Well, sure. If I'm going to honor my earthly father, how much more should I honor my heavenly father? If my Father's physical chastisement causes me to submit to Him, well, shall not my Heavenly Father's chastisement cause me to submit to Him?

And shall I not do so more willingly because I know His is for my benefit? Verse 11 says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." How many of you really enjoyed getting whippings when you were a child? None of us. They were grievous. We didn't like that. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous."

"Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Why does God chasten us? Not only that we should not be condemned with the world, but that we should have the peaceable fruit of righteousness

in our lives. He does it for our profit to make us more holy and to make us more godly.

First Corinthians 11, verse 29 says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." What happens when you eat in an unworthy manner? What happens when you fail to examine yourself? What happens when you fail to discern the Lord's body? You're chastened that you might not be condemned with the world, and that chastening can include not only physical sickness and weakness, but death. And God says he does it for our benefit. So if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged by God. What does that mean? That means when I come to observe the Lord's table, I must be brutally honest with myself. And I must see my sins in the same light as God sees them. And I must deal with them, confess them, acknowledge them, and repent of them. For if I fail to judge myself, my Heavenly Father will judge me.

First, We must either hear God's Word or we will feel his rod. Just as you have two ways of child training in your home, God has two ways of child training in His home. The first way we child train is by word. We teach our children, we explain to our children, we beseech them, we exhort them, we encourage them. As long as the child heeds our words, there's no problem. But when the child refuses to listen and refuses to obey, then we get the rod. Why? There's a biblical principle that we try to impress upon the child. He who sins must suffer. If you don't listen to the word, you're going to heed the rod. Micah 6, verse 9 says:

Applications and Conclusion

"The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Now, God said, if you don't hear my word, you're going to hear my rod. Because just as surely as you disobey my word, the rod is going to fall. I don't know about you, but I found in my life it's a whole lot easier to listen and obey than it is to be whipped. When you talk about your earthly father, they only had one way of chastening us, and that was with a rod. basically. Our heavenly father still uses a rod. But he can apply that rod in a whole lot of more ways than our earthly fathers could

ever apply the rod. They could just apply it physically. He can apply it financially. He can apply it physically. He can apply it emotionally. He can apply it mentally. He can apply it many ways. But what he's saying is if you don't heed my word, you will hear my rod.

He does it for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness and the peaceable fruit of righteousness might be in our lives. Secondly, We must make sure that we discern the Lord's body in observing the Lord's Supper and that we must understand the Lord's Supper is not something to be treated as common, profane, or an empty, meaningless ceremony or ritual. I'm afraid sometimes that those who observe the Lord's Table too frequently fall into the same trap that the Jews fell into in observing the Passover. It descended from the Lord's Passover to the Jews' Passover. The Lord's table should never be viewed as just something we do or something we have to do or something that just needs to be taken care of so we can get on with the rest of the service. That's to make it an empty, meaningless ritual or ceremony when you have that attitude.

The third observation is this. In relationship to the Lord's Supper, it's not enough to be saved and baptized and a church member with an orderly life. We must learn to partake in a worthy manner. As we partake in the worthy manner, we must examine ourselves, discern the Lord's body, and judge ourselves in order that we might not be chastened by our Heavenly Father. All of this is involved in partaking in a worthy manner. Remember, worth is not attached to the individual, for none of us are worthy in and of ourselves. The worth is attached to the manner of partaking of that supper. So we must always learn to eat and drink in a worthy manner, discerning the Lord's body, by examining and judging ourselves and making sure that we have the biblical attitude and the biblical knowledge required by God. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ that you would help us to understand and know that the table is indeed special in the sense it was ordained by thee and it portrays gospel realities and it's not to be observed in a flippant or irreverent manner. Help us, Lord, as we prepare our hearts in the not-too-distant future to make sure that we partake in a worthy manner, discerning your body, judging ourselves and examining ourselves, that we may honor Thee and glorify Thee. Teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. In Thy name we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The Lord's Supper

Part Five

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (KJV)

1 Corinthians 11 and verse 17. Now in this that I declare to you, I praise you not that you come together, not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you and I partly believe it. For there must also be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together, therefore, to one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating everyone taketh before another his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise you 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 broke 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 you as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show 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 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 you come together to eat, tarry one for another, and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that you come not together into condemnation, and the rest will I set in order when I come.

The Reproof

Introduction and Review

The Lord's Supper is indeed an ordinance. We call it a Sovereign Ordinance because it was instituted by God Himself. It is also called a Gospel Ordinance because it portrays the realities of the Gospel. We have looked at the various names given to it in Scripture and at its significance under the various meals presented in the Bible. We then gave two messages concerning its partakers and showed from Scripture that it is, first of all, a local church ordinance, intended for the assembled church.

The church must have control over it, in the sense that it can exclude those who are disorderly and unrepentant. God requires not only that one be saved, but also that he be baptized, be a church member, and live an orderly life. There are four other requirements that we must examine: we must discern the Lord's body, we must not partake unworthily, and we must judge ourselves. I explained all of those. If you have not heard those messages, they are available.

The Reproof: Coming Together for the Worse

Today we come to what I will simply call the reproof. When Paul reproves the Corinthian church, in reality he can be reproving most churches of today. In verse 18 he says, “For first of all, when ye come together in the church.” Then he continues: “I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it.” Paul had been hearing that there were problems at the Corinthian church, and he was loath to believe it. He said, in effect, “I just don’t believe everything that I’m hearing. But I’m hearing so much. I believe some of it.” In other words, something is going on; in fact, he is so convinced of the problems in the Corinthian church that he says in verse 17: “Now in this I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.” When you come together to meet as a church, it is not edifying, helping, or benefiting you. In fact, it is condemning you, and you are worse off for meeting.

How would you like for the Apostle Paul to come around today and visit most local churches? I honestly believe he would look at most churches today and say, “You’re wasting your time. You might as well stay home. You’re eating and drinking condemnation of yourself.” In other words, when you come together, you are not benefited, edified, or blessed; you are being harmed. According to the preaching that goes forward from most pulpits, that would be an accurate statement: you are being harmed and not edified.

Basically, I am pointing out this truth: we do the same thing as the Corinthians when we sin the way they sinned. When we come together, it is not for our blessing and benefit, but for our judgment and condemnation.

The Primary Sin: Divisions (Schisms)

What were the primary sins of the Corinthians? They had all kinds of problems. Out of all the churches in existence in the New Testament era, I honestly believe the Corinthian church was probably the most childish, carnal, and fleshly. Yet everywhere I go, I see Corinth Baptist Church or Corinth Polonist Baptist Church. I often think, why would anyone want to name their church Corinth? When you look at this church, there were all kinds of problems. I am not

necessarily going to deal today with the physical problems they had at Corinth.

They did have some, and Paul dealt with those particularly in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. But remember this: not all sins are physical. When we start talking about sin, most people learn about drunkenness, murder, adultery, and stealing, and those are indeed physical acts. But do you realize you can have a great sin that is not necessarily physical? Look in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1. I could quote this, but I want you to see it so I can make a point. The Apostle Paul says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved," that is, the promises given to us in this Bible, "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and" what? "Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Our filthiness can be not only in the flesh, but also in the spirit. We need to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. If you just get rid of the sins of the flesh, does that mean you are right with God? Of course not, because there are sins of the spirit as well.

One of the main sins that was in the Corinthian church was a sin of division. Look back at verse 18 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul said, "For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it."

The word for divisions here is schismata in the Greek, which refers to schisms or divisions. As we look through 1 Corinthians, I want you to see how little sins turn into big sins. Do you realize that every big sin starts with a small sin? When Lot was escaping from Sodom and Gomorrah, he said concerning Zoar, "Oh let me escape to this city, is it not a small one?" That is how we talk about our sins: "Is it not a small one?" Yet the awful, wicked sin of murder begins with a single thought. Adultery begins with a single thought. Theft begins with a single thought.

As we look through 1 Corinthians, I want you to understand that unbiblical attitudes and actions impact, compound, and ultimately achieve a very undesirable end. This is the reproof Paul is giving today to the Corinthians in this passage, over divisions. I am thankful there have been no divisions in our assembly, but divisions

can easily destroy a church, an individual, and families as well. There were various and different schisms and divisions in the Corinthian church. Most were indirectly related to the Lord's table; some were directly related to the Lord's table, but all had an impact upon the Lord's table.

Personal Divisions

Personal Divisions over Opinions

In verse 18 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11, when the Apostle Paul says, "For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you," he is speaking in the present tense: "I am continually hearing that there are divisions among you." These divisions were not just one time; they were constant, continuous, and ongoing even while the Apostle Paul was reproving the Corinthians. They were affecting their worship, especially their worship and partaking around the Lord's table.

What kind of divisions existed? Let us go back in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. First of all, there were personal divisions. In verses 10 and 11, the Apostle Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and there be no division among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."

Personal divisions, listen carefully, are based upon personal opinions. The original problem at Corinth was that each Christian had his own personal opinion and was using that opinion as a basis for fellowship. There was no charity, no consideration, and no education. The simple attitude was, "Sam, you agree with me, and I agree with you, so we'll fellowship together and fool the others." It did not really matter. The church was full of cliques: people who agreed together would associate here, others would associate over there, and another group would gather somewhere else. In other words, it was all based upon personal opinions.

One would think that something so insignificant and small as a personal opinion would hardly have any impact at all. But this was only the beginning of what would develop into a full-scale problem. We have to learn that a personal opinion is nothing more than a personal opinion. Personal opinions are not binding upon anyone.

The only thing that can bind the consciences of men is the Word of God. If you cannot find a plain, obvious principle or a plain, obvious Scripture, then you have no right to bind your opinion on anyone. You can say, "I believe this," and I will respect that. But you must also respect my opinion when I choose not to believe yours. What was happening in the Corinthian church was that they were not doing this; they were separating over personal opinions.

Please remember, I am not talking about sin or rebellion. I am simply talking about personal opinions. Some people hold their personal opinions so strongly that they are not only willing to divide over them, but also willing to fight over them.

Let me give you an illustration. I was preaching in a western state with a group of unincorporated Baptists. We were traveling around, making a circuit and teaching about the sin of incorporation. One pastor in that western state was not even a member of our group, but he graciously opened his church building to us and allowed us to use it. He was present for the meetings and invited his people because he wanted them to hear the truth.

Some other folks came who were not necessarily of our group. They were outsiders, but they were friends of mine and came because I was preaching there. When one of those visiting men found out that the local pastor did not believe what he believed, did not hold his personal opinion or interpretation of a certain passage, he was so incensed that he was ready to try to whip the pastor.

When I heard about it, my mouth fell open. I looked at the pastor who was there with him and said, “You need to get him out of here right now.” This man had graciously given us his church building, supplied the heat and air, and let us use it. Now his fellow wanted to whip this pastor because he disagreed with him.

It was not even over a real doctrinal issue; it was over personal opinions. When people take their personal opinion that far, they

have taken it too far. Anyone who disagrees with them, they normally reject, ridicule, and sometimes even fight.

Go back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter one and look at verse 10. Look what the Apostle Paul said: “Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, look that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” How can we as Christians come together and have the same mind and the same judgment?

The answer is very simple: We all submit our minds to the Word of God. That is what the Bible says in Romans 15 and verse 6: “that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Bible says in 1 Peter 4 and verse 1 that we are to arm ourselves with the mind of Jesus Christ.

In Philippians chapter 4 and verse 2, two women in the Philippian church were fussing and fighting. Their names were Euodius and Syntyche. Sometimes I get in a hurry and mispronounce them, calling them Odious and Stinky. But they were having a problem, and Paul wrote, “I beseech you, Euodius and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”

How can that be? Philippians 2:5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus.” In other words, if Euodius and Syntyche would both submit their minds to the Word of God, they would either come to the same understanding, or at least come to the attitude, “I may not see that just yet, but I am willing to agree to disagree. We are going to be friends, and we are not going to part over this issue.”

That is why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10:5, “Casting down imagination, and every high thing or thought that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Isn’t that amazing? How many thoughts are you and I allowed that are unbiblical and unscriptural? None.

So what is the answer to personal opinion? We have to learn to submit our minds to the Word of God. We have to understand that our unfailing standard is the Word of God, which is the mind of

Christ. If each of us submits our minds to the Word of God and learns to think biblically and scripturally, usually ninety-nine times out of a hundred we will come up with the same exact truth and the same exact understanding. But if we cannot come to the same exact understanding, and if we are brethren, then we must simply agree to disagree.

You remember the principle Augustine used to say? The early church father said, “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.”

I do not have time to go into this in detail as I would wish, but do you remember that in the book of 1 John, the Apostle John divides believers into three groups? He writes to the babes, to the young men, and to the fathers. What does that mean? There are different stages in the Christian life. If you go up to a two-year-old baby, do you expect that baby to eat a T-bone steak? No, you surely do not. Do you expect a sixteen-year-old young man to eat baby food? No, you do not. Do you expect a father to act like a teenager?

A baby is not going to have the understanding of a young man, and a young man is not going to have the understanding of a father. There will be differences of opinion and understanding; you have to expect that. You do not expect a young child to comprehend the Pythagorean theory or Einstein's principle of relativity. A child is not going to understand it, and most adults cannot understand it. You cannot expect someone younger in the faith to have the same maturity as someone older in the faith. Therefore, we have to submit our minds to the Word of God, and if we cannot come up with the same thing, we just have to read history. So he deals with personal opinions.

Pastoral Divisions over Personalities

Now, look in First Corinthians chapter one, verses 12 and 13. There were not only personal divisions; there were pastoral divisions. He says, "Now this I say, that every one of you said, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

This division was based upon different personalities and gifts. One man said, "I like Apollos. That guy is an orator. He can really preach." Apollos was a great orator, and Scripture tells us that. Someone else said, "I like Peter. That guy is fiery. He's gutsy. He's got it." Another said, "I like Paul. Paul is erudite. He is educated. He's intelligent." Someone else, a little more spiritual, said, "I don't like any of them; I like Christ."

They were dividing over different personalities and different gifts. How easy it is for us to forget the message and look at the man. What is important: the man or the message? Most people pick out their favorites, and once they do, they forget everybody else.

That leads to schisms and divisions. When men start following men instead of Christ and His Word, you are always going to have divisions. When you start following oratory, education, or gifts instead of Christ, you have problems. I will guarantee you that many of these Corinthians, when Peter spoke, stayed away. They found other things to do. They did not like Peter; they wanted to hear Paul or Apollos. Some would say, “No, no, I am not going unless so-and-so is speaking. I do not like that.” No, you do not look at the man, and you do not look at the gift. You look at the message.

I never will forget what one of my preacher friends told me. He said, “I like ice cream. I do not care what flavor it is; I just like ice cream. By the same token, I like preaching. I like to hear the Word of God taught. I do not care if a man stands in one place and is monotone. I do not care if he runs around. I do not care if he swings from the chandelier, just so he is preaching the Word of God. That is what counts.”

Do you realize that is true? That is what counts.

Now let me show you how Paul says this division can be resolved. Look at 1 Corinthians 3:3-4. He says, “Are you not yet carnal? For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal and locus men? And while one says, I am a Paul, and another, I am a Apollos, are you not carnal?” He then says, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he

that planted anything, neither he that watered, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planted and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." What is he saying? The men are nothing but instruments.

Who is to be honored and glorified? God. What is to be received? The message. It is the Lord who gives the gift. It is the Lord who blesses and makes His Word effectual. It is not eloquence, oratory, illustrations, or personality. It is God alone.

If I were simply to call the name Charles Haddon Spurgeon, everyone here would recognize it. He was one of the greatest Baptist preachers who ever lived in England. But do you know what happened when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted? He went to a local Baptist church during a severe storm. The preacher could not make it to church, and only a handful of people were there. Since the pastor could not come, a deacon stood up and said, "Well, I'll say a few words before we go home."

He opened his Bible to Isaiah 45:22 and read, "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Then the deacon said, "Now the text says, 'Look.' Why, any fool can look. All you have to do is look to Christ, and you will live. You will be saved. Any fool can do that." He spoke for two or three minutes and said, "Let's pray."

What happened? The greatest Baptist preacher in the world was convicted and converted through the reading of one passage of the Word of God by a man who was not even a preacher. What am I showing you? I am showing that it was God who received the praise and honor.

I have heard some of the greatest preachers in the world today. Although you may be impressed with their oratory and ability, there may be nothing as far as spirituality and blessing. Yet I have heard a simple country bumpkin get up, stumble around, mispronounce words, and have no outline that you could even follow, and still the blessing and power of God be upon him, so that multitudes were blessed and converted. It is not the man; it is the message. And it is not merely the message; it is the power of God upon the message.

Look in 1 Corinthians 4:7. Paul is speaking to the preachers: “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what is thou that thou didst not receive? Now thou didst receive it, what is thou glorious that thou hadst not received it?” Do you realize that each gift God gives is from God Himself? Preachers do not choose their gift.

I want to show you this truth from 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 10 and 11. I am pointing out the fact that preachers do not choose their gift. God is the one who gives the gift. In 1 Peter 4:10, the Scripture says, “As every man hath received the gift,” and he is talking about ministers or preachers, “even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” So God has given different gifts to different preachers and to different Christians. He says in verse 11, “If any man speak, let him speak as of the oracles of God.”

In other words, if you go preach, you preach the word. If you need a minister—that is, if he waits on people—let him do it as the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen. In other words, God says, “I am the one who gives the gift. You don’t choose it.”

I had a very dear pastor friend who is now in glory. My wife will immediately know who I am talking about. I was talking to him one day, and he looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, “Brother, I would give anything to be able to teach the word of God like you.” When he said that, my mouth fell open. I said, “Brother, you don’t understand. I would give anything just to be as loving and kind and gracious as you are.”

All the time, the fellow was envying my gift, so to speak, and I was envying his gift. This brother could not make you angry. You would go to apologize, and he was so kind, loving, and gracious.

The point is this: God has tempered the ministry together. He has given every minister a specific gift or gifts. Preachers do not choose their gifts; God has given the body exactly what that body needs.

My friend could not preach and teach the way I could, that is for sure. But I could never have the empathy, patience, and love that he had, because that was his strong point. God has given us exactly

what we need. Therefore, we must not say, “That guy just can't preach.” No, no, no, no, no. It is not that he is not as good at oratory as someone else. Listen to what he is saying, observe his life, and listen to the message. When God gives a gift to a man, whether you like it or admire it or not, you need it.

Here were personal divisions. Here were pastoral divisions. But look in your Bibles to First Corinthians 6. There were judicial divisions. First Corinthians 6, verses 1 through 5: “Dare any of you having a matter against another go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world, and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”

Judicial Divisions and God's Orderly Resolution

What was happening was this: there were personal divisions based on personal opinions and pastoral divisions based on personalities and gifts, but there were also judicial divisions based on ignorance of God and His orderly way. Some had civil disagreements among their brethren, and they were taking those brethren immediately to court before unbelievers. Can you get the picture of what was happening in Corinth? Brother was taking brother to court before the unsaved and spilling all their dirty laundry right before them.

An attitude of disunity, unforgiveness, and greediness was being displayed before unbelievers, and the unbelievers were saying to themselves, “Man, if this is Christianity, I don’t have anything to do with it. Not me.” What was the answer? Paul suggests two answers. The first is this. He says in verse seven, “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to all one with another.” Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? In other words, be willing to suffer wrong. Be willing to be defrauded.

This is not talking about some great, important matter. Look in your Bibles at 1 Peter 2:20: “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Turn over to 1 Peter 4:19: “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

When the Apostle says, “Why do you not suffer wrong? Why do you not suffer yourself to be defrauded?” he is not talking about someone trying to steal your home or take away something of great value. No, no. Remember Matthew 5? Our Lord said, “If a man sue you for his coat, for your cloak, give him your coat also.” What is a coat worth? It is nothing. Sometimes it is easier just to suffer wrong than to go through the motions while developing an attitude of bitterness and resentment. Suffer the wrong. Get over it. There is more to life than this little petty thing.

There is another answer. If you are going to resolve the conflicts legally, God has an orderly way to do that as well. Look at verse four. The latter part is, in reality, a question explaining the verse: “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life,” why are you sitting those who are least esteemed in the church?

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 18:15-17 (KJV)

In other words, here's what he's asking: If you really have problems, if you have something that needs to be decided, why are you setting someone up to judge who has no idea of the issues or no concept of biblical law? To show you that is the correct interpretation, look in verse 5. He says, "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" What's he saying? Is there not anybody in Corinth that's got any sense at all? That's what he's asking. Why would you set someone up to be a judge who doesn't know anything about the issues, or couldn't resolve them if he heard them? No. He says you use someone wise. He's talking about working things out according to God's orderly way.

Let me show you very quickly. Look in your Bibles to Matthew 5 and then to Matthew 18. Each of these points could be a sermon

> in and of itself. Matthew 5, verse 23: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."
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> Now turn over to Matthew 18, verse 15: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."
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> Now, let's stop there for a moment. Go back to Matthew 5 and look at verse 23. Make sure this is underlined in your mind: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar," now watch, "and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee." Here's my question: Do you have anything against him? No. But you remember, he's got something against you.

If you have no hard feelings toward your brother and nothing against him, but he has something against you, and you remember it, what does God say? You leave your gift and go to be reconciled to your brother.

Now look at Matthew 18:15: “Moreover, five brothers shall trespass against thee. Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Notice what this passage teaches. He does not necessarily have anything against you; you may have something against him. What does God say? You go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. It does not matter whether you have something against him or he has something against you. Who is responsible to get the matter settled? You are, regardless. If you are involved in a dispute, it is your responsibility to get it resolved.

Suppose Ed has defrauded me of one thousand dollars. This is an apparent case of fraud, and it is more than I can simply shrug my shoulders at. What is my option? My first option was to be

defrauded, but I do not want to be defrauded out of one thousand dollars. My first step, then, is to go privately to Ed and say, “Ed, you have done me wrong. You have stolen from me. I want you to make this right.” I give him the opportunity to make it right. He may understand that he was wrong, but he may also say, “I beat you out of that money fair and square. If you think I am giving it back to you, you are crazy.” What do I do next?

Next, I get Dr. Bowen, and we go see Ed. If Ed still will not listen, I get Dr. Holmes, and we go again. I may go four or five times to different men, but Ed still will not do what is right. Finally, I come to the church and to the pastor: “Here is what has happened. We have been through this stage, this stage, and this step. Would you send somebody from the church to talk to him?” A delegation of men goes from the church to speak with him and try to get the matter resolved, but Ed cusses them out, runs them off, and will not listen. What is the next step? If he will not hear them, God says, “Let him be under these, a heathen and a publican.”

That is, you excommunicate him. You put him outside of the church.

A brother may not take a brother to law, but a brother may take a heathen man to law. Then I take him to court and say, “He stole a thousand dollars from me.” That is God’s orderly way. This teaches us that there is a need for ecclesiastical courts. I am not going to get into this today, but they are very important. They are needed and necessary.

When we have been wronged, we have two options. We may either suffer the wrong, or we may resolve it in God’s orderly way; but disobedience is not an option.

Intellectual and Spiritual Divisions

There were personal divisions, pastoral divisions, and judicial divisions, but fourthly, there were intellectual divisions. Look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians chapter 8. I want you to see how all these divisions were multiplying and cascading in this simple little church. “Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any

man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

There was a division in this church based upon knowledge and understanding. That is what this is all about. Verse 2 is very important: "And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." When we think that we have arrived, that we have all the answers and know it all, what does the Scripture say? We know nothing yet. In other words, that is a very apparent display of a lack of knowledge of the Word of God.

When you and I try to acquire knowledge merely to attain facts, in order that we might demonstrate the greatness of our intellect, it always leads to pride. That is what he meant in 1 Corinthians 8:1 when he says that this kind of knowledge puffs up. It makes one proud, arrogant, and haughty.

You remember Job's three friends, Bilad, Eliphaz, and Zophar? Who would want friends like those fellows? They believed that they were intellectually superior to Job. They knew that old Job had done something wrong, and they set out to straighten him out based upon their superior intellect. I love what Job said in Job 12:2.

And I've quoted this to people in time past who needed it. Job said to them, "No doubt, that you are the people and wisdom shall perish with you." In other words, when you die, it's all over. We call those people know-it-alls, and no one likes to be around them. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." First Corinthians 10:12 says, "He that thinketh, he standeth." What?

"Take heed lest he falls." Now, there are intellectual divisions among us. I do not know what Dr. Bowen knows, or what Dr. Horne knows, and I do not know what Dr. Brissey knows. I do not have the knowledge in some areas that Henry has, but they do not have the knowledge in other areas that I have. As Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "You can borrow brains, but you can't borrow character."

If I want to know something about OBGYN, I say, "Dr. Bowen, I need to ask you a question." If I need to know something about animals, I say, "Dr. Holmes, I need to ask you a question." If I need to know something about chiropractic, I say, "Dr. Brizzi, I need to

ask you a question." But just because there are intellectual divisions, in the sense that some are superior to others in certain areas, does not mean that we can become puffed up and divide, saying, "You do not have an earned doctorate the way I have an earned doctorate."

I never will forget what Lester Olaf told Bob Jones University. The university wanted to confer an honorary doctorate upon him. He said, "Thank you, but no, thank you." Then he said, "That's kind of like putting whipped cream on onions. You just don't do it." Not everybody is an intellectual giant; let us face it. But look at what God says in verse one: "As we know, they all have knowledge, knowledge puffed up, but what charity edify." What does that mean? If I come to Dr. Holman and say, "Doc, I have this problem, and I do not understand what I can do to my cow or my horse to correct this thing," he may explain it to me. He does not say, "Go to veterinary school and learn what I know."

If he took that attitude, how many clients is he going to have? None. So this is what God is saying: there may be people who are intellectually superior, and there are. Not everybody has the same intellect. I'm going to do it anyhow. But you heard about the computer that they designed that would talk to a man based upon his IQ. You had to punch in your IQ, and then the computer would converse with you. One guy went in and punched in his IQ of 140, and the computer started discussing Einstein's theory of relativity with him. The next guy came behind and punched in his IQ of 100, and the computer started conversing with him on stories out of the newspaper. The next fellow came in and punched in his IQ of 60. The computer sat silent for a few moments and then said, "How about them dogs?"

Just because we're not intellectual giants doesn't mean that we can't be Christians, can't be brethren, and can't help each other. This is what the Apostle Paul is saying. Love is willing to teach. Love is willing to help. Love is willing to build someone up and not tear someone down. Love will be able to educate. So the way to resolve the intellectual division is to realize that whatever understanding you have, God gave it to you.

I got news for you: God can take it away just as easily, just as quickly as He gave it to you. So there is no reason to divide over that.

Then, fifthly, very quickly, there were spiritual divisions. These are in chapters 12 through 14. These spiritual divisions were based upon differing gifts. Look in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 1. Paul says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Skip down to verse 25: "That there should be no schism or no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another."

What happened in the Corinthian church was that there were different gifts. Instead of using their gifts for the edification of the body, they were using them for personal pride and personal gratification. The Corinthians were using their spiritual gift as a measuring rod. They were saying, "If you don't have the same gift that I have, you're not as spiritual as I am."

That is exactly what happens today when some groups take unbiblical latitude: “Well, if you don't speak in tongues or if you don't have my gift, then you're not saved, or you're not nearly as spiritual as I am. Look at me. I have this gift.” That is exactly what they were doing. When one takes that attitude, he is denying the very foundation for which God gave gifts to begin with. God did not give gifts in the early church, or in this day and time, for anyone to personally glory in. He gave them for the edification of the church. Look in 1 Corinthians 14.

Let me show you how they were being abused. In verse 26, Paul says, “How is it, brethren, when ye come together,” that is, for church, “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.” He said, “How is it when you come together, everybody's got something?”

I tell you what was going on: they were trying to stand up, glorify themselves, and elevate themselves with pride. They were not doing this for the edification of the church or to teach people. Skip down to verse 33: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” The truth of the matter is this: God is not the author of confusion. Gifts, whatever they are, are not to be used for personal pride, superiority, or confusion. I could tell you story after story, but I am not going to. Listen instead to Paul's answer. Look back in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 11: “But all these worketh

that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Now let me ask you a question: What preacher or Christian gets the gifts that he wants? None. What gift do you get? Whatever God is pleased to give you, and that is it. In the same chapter, verse 28, we read: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Then consider the questions: "Are all apostles?" No. "Are all prophets?" No. "Are all teachers?" No. "Are all workers of miracles?" No. "Have all the gifts of healing?" No. "Do all speak with tongues?" No. "Do all interpret?" No.

But then he says, "But covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I show to you a more excellent way." Of course, he is talking about love right there.

Not only does God not give everyone the same gifts, He does so for a reason. Not all the members of the body have the same function. What if your body was nothing but a mouth? You could eat all you wanted to, but you would be bumping into every fire hydrant you ran across. What if you only had an eye? You would be starving to death.

Look what he says in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 12: "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink unto one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If a foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, am I not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were a hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one members, where were the body?"

"But now are they many members, yet one body. Of the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee. Nor again the head

to the feet, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary, and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness, for our uncomely parts have no need."

"But God," watch now, what has God done? "God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked." Why? "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another." God has given you different gifts because you are different members of the body. Therefore, you need different things.

I got news for you: I don't wear shoes on my head, and I'll put socks on my ears. My head doesn't need that. My feet need shoes and socks. That's what God is saying. The way to resolve these spiritual divisions is to recognize, first, that God sovereignly gives you your gift, and then God sovereignly places you in the body where He wants you.

One of the problems in the average church is this, to put it bluntly: everybody wants to be the chief, and nobody wants to be the Indians. But you have to have members of a body. I cannot fuss with God over where He has placed me, or over the lack of gifts or the gifts He has given me. That is totally up to Him.

Social and Cultural Divisions at the Table

Lastly, let me tie this together for you. If you look in chapter 11, where we were, there were social and cultural divisions. I want you to see how all of these divisions worked against the Corinthian church. This is why Paul is reproving them. In verse 21 of First Corinthians chapter 11, he says, "For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Verse 22: "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." Look in verse 33: "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

These social and cultural divisions were based upon wealth and status. What began in chapter 1 as a personal opinion, and then a pastoral opinion, a judicial opinion—see how all these things have multiplied and come down to a social and cultural division. If it is all right to divide over something as innocuous as a personal opinion, why is it not all right to divide over pastors, judicial problems, intellectual problems, or spiritual problems? And if it is all right to divide in those areas, why can't we divide socially and culturally, and why can't we divide when we eat together?

All of these divisions had escalated until they finally bulldozed their way into the worship of the Lord's Supper. In the New Testament era, the agape, the love feast, or the common meal, usually preceded the Lord's Supper, which was generally the culmination of that worship service. Instead of the Corinthian church providing the common meal from the church treasury, or everyone pooling their food together and allowing each person to receive what he needed, the wealthy and cultural elite brought their own food. They ate separately, or ate early before the less prominent members arrived.

In this way they shamed the poor, who could not afford the quality or quantity of food that the rich bought, nor the delicacies they enjoyed. The rich brought their wonderful food and delicacies but did not want to share. They sat down and ate before all the members arrived, using hunger as an excuse: they could not wait and therefore needed to go ahead and eat.

Paul gives the answer to this social and cultural division. He says, “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Then he asks, “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?” In other words, if you are coming to church merely to eat, stay at home and eat.

That is the simple answer: If you cannot wait to eat, eat at home, either staying there or eating before you come. That is what he said in verse 33: “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.” If you cannot wait until everybody gets to the table, either stay home or eat before you leave home. If you are going to have a love feast, a common meal, then you must learn to wait for one another.

So here is what is happening. Do you think these social and cultural divisions are innocuous? Do you think what they were doing was non-incriminating? Look at verse 22: "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 were they doing? They were despising God's church and the individual members of the church. They were despising those members who happened to be the foot, the knee, the hip, or the hand, simply because they were not the head and did not have the same social, cultural, or economic status. He says they were despising the church of God and shaming the brethren. Practically speaking, this was an insult to Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church.

Paul is condemning in 1 Corinthians not merely visible, open separation, but also the inward attitude and disposition that lead to alienation and separation and cause these divisions.

Look at verse 20: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." That verse can be interpreted several ways. First, he may be referring to the common meal, or the agape, the love feast. Secondly, Paul may be saying, "This is not the way to eat the Lord's supper." In other words, you may be gathering for this purpose, yet you are not really observing the Lord's table, because what you are doing does not deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as the Lord's table. Or, thirdly, he may be saying that you cannot eat the Lord's supper because of your attitudes and divisions. How can you partake of the Lord's table, which teaches our unity and oneness in Christ and our being nourished by Christ, when you are divided?

Or he could be, fourthly, reproving them for their misuse of the love feast. This was called the agape, or love feast. What do you do when you say that you love? Look in 1 John 3:16. Suppose I tell Henry, Ed, and Hobie to come to my house for dinner because I really love them. Yet when they arrive, I have either eaten everything or eaten the best food and left them only peas and bread. What does the Bible say? "Hereby perceive we the love of God." Now watch this. Do not let me misread it: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He told us He loved us." Is that what it says? No. "Hereby perceive we, understand we, grasp we, comprehend we the love of

God." Why? "Because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shut up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." What is he saying? If I invite these men to my house to eat because I love them, and either eat everything myself or save the best for myself, does that demonstrate love? No. If I see them hungry and shut up my bowels of compassion, what does he say? "How dwelleth the love of God in me?" If we say that we love the brethren and are not willing to share, even our food at a common meal, what does God say? We do not love the brethren. We are shaming those who have not, and we are despising the church of God.

First, unbiblical divisions. There are reasons to divide biblically, but those are not what we are talking about today. Unbiblical divisions, whether visible separation or inward alienation, will bring the judgment and condemnation of God upon us. In other words, we must endeavor to be biblical in every area of our lives. In those personal opinions and simple ways where we cannot agree, we must agree to disagree, still remain friends, and not divide over non-issues.

Every unbiblical division, whether visible separation or inward alienation, will bring the judgment of God upon us. The worst of all divisions would be over the Lord's table. If divisions in general are condemned in Scripture—and they are—how much more judgment will there be if we divide over the Lord's table?

That table is to picture our union and our communion in Him. If we have a falling out over the time of it, the servers of it, or the elements—whether we use wine, grape juice, or whatever—how much worse is it? At that very table, this is to picture our union and our communion. Unbiblical divisions are wrong, and that is why Paul is condemning them, especially in relationship to the Lord's Suffering.

The Meaning of 'Heresies' and the Approved

One last verse before I close today is verse 19, because people have already been thinking about it. What did Paul mean when he said, “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”? The Greek word for heresies is where we get our English word heresy. Heresis is the word. It is from hereomai, which means to choose. It means a mental tendency, a mindset, or a school or sect. In this context, heresy refers to a school or party formed on the basis of opinion. The same word is used in Acts 5:17 for the sect of the Sadducees.

What did you have to believe to be a Sadducee? You had to deny the physical resurrection and the existence of angels. That is personal opinion, and it is called a heresy or a sect. What about Acts 15, verse 5? There was a sect of the Pharisees. You had to believe certain things to be among the Pharisees. So what the Scripture is saying in 1 Corinthians 11:19 is not using the word in an ecclesiastical sense, referring particularly to doctrine, but rather to a division, a sect, or a schism.

“For there must also be schools of thought, or schools of opinions among you.” Then he says, “That they which are approved,” and the word approved is hoi dokimoi. You remember that dokimazo means to be tested and tried, that you might be approved. “So that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” Who, then, are the approved in this verse?

They are those who refuse to become mixed up with the personal opinions of men and prefer to stand by the principles of the Word of God. Sam says, “Well, all of those who agree with me come over here.” Roy says, “Well, all of those who agree with me come over here.” Who are the approved? They are the ones who sit back and say, “I'm not getting mixed up with any of you nuts. I know what the Scripture says. I'm not going to be pressured by the whims and the thoughts of man. I'm going to stick with the Word of God.” That is what Paul is saying.

There were some in the Corinthian church wanting to cause divisions, with all these sects. But those who are approved will say, “Personality doesn't mean anything. Opinions don't mean anything.

It's the Word of God that counts, and I am sticking with the Word of God." Remember this: not all sins are physical. Our Lord said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Father, help us now to love Thee. Help us to be biblical and scriptural. Help us, Lord, to search our hearts and cleanse our minds from sins of the spirit as well as sins of the flesh. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name I pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 6

The Lord's Supper

Part Six

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 11:20-34 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

When you come together, therefore, to one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, every one taketh before another his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in?

Or despise you 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 broke 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 you, as often as you drink it, in

> remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show 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 the 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 to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
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> 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.

The Lord's Supper is indeed an ordinance. It is called a sovereign ordinance because God Himself ordained it, and a gospel ordinance because the realities of the gospel are portrayed therein.

So far in our study, we have looked at the names given to the Lord's Supper in the Bible, its significance under the different meals represented thereby, and its partakers. I showed you that it was given to the local church, as an assembled body, and that it was also given to the local church in the context of church discipline. Then I showed you that there were at least four general requirements: number one, you must be saved; number two, baptized; number three, a church member; and number four, a godly or orderly life. But then the Bible went ahead and gave four more specific requirements. You and I must not partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily.

I explained that we must judge ourselves, examine ourselves, and discern the Lord's body. Then last week, we looked at the reproof the Apostle Paul gave the Corinthian church. The Apostle had heard of all the divisions and problems that were in the Corinthian church. According to his own words, he was actually loathing to believe everything that he heard, yet he had to confess that some of it was undoubtedly true because he had been hearing so much.

We looked at the spiritual problems the church was having and at all the divisions. There were personal divisions based upon personal opinion; pastoral divisions based upon differing personalities and gifts; judicial divisions in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, based upon the fact that brother was going to law with brother, and that before unbelievers; intellectual divisions in 1 Corinthians 8; spiritual divisions in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14; and social and cultural divisions, which we dealt with in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

In fact, there were so many problems in the Corinthian church that the Apostle Paul could not even answer or address all the problems in one letter. He wrote them two letters, and at the end, in verse 34, he says, “and the rest will I set in order when I come.” In other words, he could not take care of all the problems in the two letters. He had to come there personally and take care of the problem.

When we are talking about the Lord's Supper, I must say that one of the greatest tragedies of history is that the time we spend together in the Lord's Supper—when I say “we,” I mean Christendom as a whole—has all too often been the focus of fussing, feuding, and fighting. The body of Christ has been fragmented over virtually every aspect of the Lord's Supper. That Supper, designed to show us the unity of believers and that we all feed upon Jesus Christ, has consequently been used to cause divisions.

That is what was happening in the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians 11:17, look what he said: “Now in this I declare to you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.” When the church met and came together to partake of the Lord's Supper, he said it was not benefiting them at all. They were coming together for the worse and not for the better. Then, in verse 20, as I went over last week, he said, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.” What did the apostle mean by that? What he was probably saying is simply this: What you are doing cannot even be referred to as the Lord's Supper. They had taken that which was profound and turned it into that which was profane. They were not in any disposition or attitude even to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Controversial Issues: Time and Servers

Today, the issues I am going to deal with are also controversial. It has not only been controversial who partakes of the Lord's Table, or the elements, which I will discuss beginning week after next; it has also been a point of contention as to the time and who are the servers of the Lord's Table. To me, this is a very simple thing, yet it has caused great agitation among many believers. Today I am going to deal with two points: number one, the time, or frequency, of the Lord's Supper; and then the servers. I hope I can resolve this for us. When I speak of the time of the Lord's Supper, I am referring primarily to its frequency.

Frequency of the Lord's Supper

We should ask this question: Should the Lord's Supper be observed daily, weekly, quarterly, or annually? What does the Scripture say? Why is it that some churches observe it every Sunday, some every month, some every quarter, and some every year, once a year? Who is correct, and why are there so many different understandings concerning this?

Acts 2:42,46 and Daily Observance

Many scholars have held that, in the early times of Christendom, the Lord's table was observed every day. The reason they give is based upon Acts 2:42 and verse 46: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.” Then, in verse 46: “And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking of bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”

In order to hold that the early church observed the Lord's table on a daily basis, one must first postulate that the breaking of bread in Acts chapter 2, verses 42 and 46, did indeed refer to the Lord's Supper, or at least included it in the common meal. There were several reasons why the early church met daily. The first, of course, was fellowship. The second reason was the feeding of the poor, especially the poor who were among them. That is why they had these common meals together.

Acts 20:7 and Weekly Observance

For someone to say that Acts 2:42 and 46 describe the Lord's Supper being observed, however, Scripture does not say that at all. Most Bible scholars would say this: If the Lord's table was observed daily originally, later on it was observed weekly—that is, once on Sunday. Let us look in Acts chapter 20, because there are plenty of churches that observe the Lord's table every week. So every week they observe the Lord's table.

Am I condemning them for this? No, I am not, and you are going to see why in just a moment. I think there could be problems with that, and that is my thought as well. But I am going to show you what the Bible says in Acts 20, verses 6 and 7: “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. And 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.”

Some will say, “Here it is. The disciples at Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread.” If you understand the significance of the Lord’s Day, you have no difficulty with Sunday being the day of observance. However, many churches and Christians take their stance for weekly observance of the Lord’s Table from this one passage.

They have gone beyond saying, “Those Christians at Troas did it, and it would probably be good if we did it.” That would be one thing. Instead, they look at the text and say, “Those Christians at Troas did it; therefore, it must be done by every church every Sunday, or else.” In other words, they turn it into a rigid law.

Some go so far as to say that if you do not observe the Lord’s Table weekly, it is sin—a soul-damning sin—and that you will be lost and go to hell. Some hold this view so strongly that they will not fellowship with anyone who does not share it. You may think I am exaggerating, but I am not. There are those who say that if you do not observe the Lord’s Table every Sunday, and only on Sunday, then you are an apostate and bound for hell.

Here are statements by Ron Holbrook, a minister with the non-institutional Churches of Christ in Kentucky. In his article, “The Lord’s Supper is the day specified,” he writes: “Yes, the Lord’s Day, Sunday, is specified by the Lord for eating the Lord’s Supper. This day, and this day alone, is the day authorized for eating the Lord’s Supper when saints assemble to worship.”

He uses Acts 20:7: “This day, this day alone, is the day authorized for taking a collection when we assemble to worship.” He also uses 1 Corinthians 16:2. Then he asks, “Is it a sin to eat the Lord’s Supper on other days?” Yes, it is. It is always sinful to act without the authority of Christ. When we eat the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day, we do so under His authority. When we assert the right to do so on any other day, we do so without His authority and solely by human authority.

Let me stop there. I hope you heard what he said. He said the day specified to observe the Lord’s table is Sunday, and the day specified to take the collection is Sunday. Then he said that if you do this on any other day, you are acting outside the authority of Christ. He goes further and points out that many will be lost at the Day of Judgment because they fail to honor Christ by acting only under His authority. “To act outside the sphere of Christ’s authority is the very essence of sin. Thus, those who partake of the Lord’s Supper on any day other than Sunday or who take up a collection on any day other than Sunday can expect to hear these heartbreaking words from Jesus, ‘I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’” He concludes, “Let us exalt Christ by submitting to Christ and eating the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day.” Now what has he just said?

He said that if you observe the Lord's table on any day except Sunday, do not do it every Sunday, or take up a collection on any day except Sunday, it is a soul-damning sin. Stop and think about the implications of this.

Very obviously, it would be a sin to act independently of Christ. That was Adam's first sin: he wanted to act independently of God and be his own God. But the Bible defines sin for us in 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is a violation of the law. Christ, by His authority, has given us the law. Certainly, it would be wrong to act

independently of Christ. But you are not acting independently of Christ when you act according to the Word of God.

When you examine Acts 20:6-7, you must make a large number of assumptions to say that the Christians at Troas observed the Lord's table every Sunday. The passage says, "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 were at Troas, and Paul abode there seven days. Then, "And upon the first day of the week," Sunday, "when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight."

First, to teach that the Christians at Troas observed the Lord's Supper, you must assume that "the breaking of bread" was indeed the Lord's Supper and not the common meal referred to many times in Scripture. The Bible does not make clear whether this was the common meal, the Lord's Supper, or whether the Lord's Supper was included. It simply says they came together to break bread. Second, you must assume that this congregation met every Sunday and observed the Lord's Supper each time they met.

The scriptures do not say that. That is an assumption. Could this have been a special event with the appearance and preaching of the Apostle Paul? To reach that conclusion, you must first assume that the breaking of bread was the Lord's Supper, or at least that the Lord's Supper was included. Secondly, you must assume that they did this every Sunday. The scripture does not say that. It says only that, upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them.

Thirdly, from this passage you would have to assume that every church in the first century met every Sunday and observed the Lord's table each time they met. The Bible does not tell us that. It tells us that these Christians at Troas met and broke bread together. Fourthly, in order to conclude a weekly observance from this passage, you would have to assume that the practice at the church of Troas was binding upon all churches in the first century and throughout all the ages.

The Bible does not say that. It is not what one church does that binds our consciences. It is only what the Word of God teaches that binds our consciences.

Would I condemn the church at Troas if they observed the Lord's table every week? Of course not. But simply because they observed the Lord's table every week does not mean that every church did, or that every church would have to. To conclude that what the Christians at Troas did would be binding upon Christians throughout all the ages is begging the question.

There is a difference between eisegesis, reading into a passage, and exegesis, reading out of the passage. All this tells us is that the Christians at Troas met on the first Sunday, broke bread, and did so when the Apostle preached there. That is what the passage teaches.

What would settle the question of when Christians should observe the Lord's Supper? It would be a verse in the Bible saying that Christians should observe it each Sunday, each quarter, semi-annually, or annually. But there is no such verse.

The Biblical Phrase 'As Often As'

The frequency of observing the Lord's table is not given to us in Scripture except in one place. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is quoting Christ: "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 show the Lord's death till he come."

What does the Scripture say in verse 25? "As often as you drink." Then, in verse 26, "as often as." What does Scripture say? Whenever you do it. If you do it weekly, fine. If you do it monthly, fine. If you do it quarterly, fine. If you do it annually, fine. If you do it biannually or once every ten years, fine. Whenever you do it—as often as you do it. What our Lord says is simply this: Do this. Here is what you do.

Paul explains the significance of the Lord's Supper in this passage, and then quotes our Lord as saying, "as often as you do this, you do it in remembrance of me." I submit to you that the frequency, or the

time of observing the Lord's Supper, has been addressed by our Lord and by the inspired apostle with this phrase, "as often as."

This phrase, "as often as," is from a Greek relative adverb, Hosakis. This adverb is used only with the notion of indefinite repetition. Dr. A. T. Robertson, in his grammar on the Greek New Testament, in light of historical research and other grammarians, points out that this is an adverb with indefinite repetition. The only other time this phrase is used in the Bible is found in Revelation 11:6, where we read about the two witnesses: "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy, and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues." What is that next phrase?

"As often as they will." It is exactly the same word: "as often as." When would the two witnesses smite the earth? As often as they wanted to. It did not have to be weekly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. They could do it twice a week, twice a month, or twice a year. It was totally up to them. It was not only indefinite, but left solely in their power. They could smite the earth as often as they desired.

When you go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, here is what our Lord is saying, in essence: "as often as you do this." Whenever you desire. There are no verses in the Bible that regulate the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper. What our Lord says is simply this: "as often as you do it, you do it in this manner. You do it in this way." In other words, it is left completely in the realm of what you and I would call whenever. This relative adverb, Hosakis, translated "whenever" or "as often as," is nonspecific in regard to time.

Hermeneutical Principle and Confessions

Daily, weekly, or monthly, all would be in accord with the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of Paul. Now consider a vital hermeneutical principle. Hermeneutics is the art or science of Bible interpretation, and there are laws even given in the Bible concerning hermeneutics, that is, how to interpret the Bible. Here is a vital hermeneutical question.

Let us assume that in Acts 20, verses 6 and 7, the Christians at Troas did meet each Sunday and observe the Lord's table every Sunday. What should have more weight with Christians and with other churches: what the Christians did at Troas, or what Christ and the Apostle Paul said?

Just because the church at Troas did it weekly, even if that could be proved, does not mean anything to us, especially when we have Christ and the Apostle Paul saying, "as often as you do it." If the Christians of Troas did not do it every week, that fits with "as often as." If churches do it once a month, quarterly, biannually, annually, or once every ten years, that still fits with "as often as." In other words, what our Lord is telling us is this.

It is not necessarily the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper that counts, but the manner in which it is observed. You remember, the Lord's Passover turned into the Jews' Passover, and the Lord's Supper could just as easily turn into our supper. The Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of the Passover.

How often was the Passover observed? Once a year. You could then make an argument for the observance of the Lord's Supper based upon the observance of the Passover. I am not saying that is what we need to do. I am simply saying that it would be a logical argument, considering the fact that the Lord's Supper was instituted in light of, and in the context of, the Passover. But the only logical, sane, and scriptural answer as to when we observe the Lord's Supper is to follow the clear teaching of the apostle and of our Lord, who said, "as often as."

Two of the most respected confessions of faith in our day and time are the Westminster Confession of Faith and the London or Philadelphia Confession of Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith was written from 1644 to 1648. It is predominantly Presbyterian. Historically, Baptists and Presbyterians have been very close. Usually, the only two subjects on which Baptists and Presbyterians disagree are baptism and church government. Baptists initially used the Westminster Confession of Faith for years until they said, We disagree with the Presbyterians on baptism and on the structure of church government; let us get our own. Thus, the Old London Confession of Faith was developed. It was the confession

Charles Haddon Spurgeon used in his Metropolitan Tabernacle. In 1744, a hundred and something Baptist preachers met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and adopted the Old London Confession of Faith as their confession of faith; thus it became known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith.

Here is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says concerning the Lord's Supper: "The communion or supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated, but how often may be considered and determined by the ministers and other church governors of each congregation as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge. And when it shall be administered, we judge it convenient to be done after the morning sermon."

The Westminster Confession of Faith says, “The communion or supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated. But how often may be considered and determined by the ministers and other church governors as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.” They then say, “and when it shall be administered,” whenever you do it, “we judge it convenient.” In other words, they think it would be appropriate to do it after the morning sermon. They are not binding anybody; they are simply saying what they think. The Westminster Confession of Faith says that however often it is done is left up to the pastor and, basically, to the people, based upon their needs, especially for their edification and comfort.

The Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith says, “The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by Him the same night wherein He was betrayed, to be observed in His churches until the end of the world for the perpetual remembrance, and showing forth the sacrifice of Himself in death, confirmation of faith of believers and all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him, and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him and with each other.”

If you would take the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith, you will find, in regard to the Lord's Supper, eight paragraphs explaining and teaching the Lord's Supper. Out of those eight

paragraphs, the only thing said about frequency is this: "it is to be observed in his churches until the end of the world." It does not specify how often. And do you know why these confessions do not specify how often? Because the Scripture does not specify how often. That is why the Scripture says, "as often as you do it." How simple things would be for us if the Apostle Paul had only had the common sense enough to say, "do this once a week" or "once a quarter." But he did not do that, you see. The Bible says it is the glory of God to conceal a thing and the honor of kings to search a matter out. So it is up to us to search the principles out.

Manner Over Frequency

I honestly, genuinely believe that Christ is more concerned with the manner of our observance than He is the frequency of it. If we do it right one time, that is a whole lot better than doing it wrong a thousand times.

Now, I want to show you just another parallel illustration. Look in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter six and verse 17. If I were to ask you—and do not answer out loud; I do not really want to know—have you fasted recently? From the looks of most of us, it is pretty obvious we have not. But a fast does not have to be a long period of time.

It can be a day. It can be a week. It can be up to forty days. But I am simply pointing out what our Lord says in Matthew 6 and verse 17: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face."

Now, why did He say that? Look in verse 16: "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to fast. Verily I say to you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Now, "but thou, when thou fastest," did our Lord tell us when we were to fast? Did He tell us whether to do it weekly? Did He tell us whether to do it monthly? Did He tell us whether to do it annually? No.

He just said, whenever you do it, don't do it the way the Pharisees do. What is he concerned about? The manner. It is not the frequency; it is the manner in which we fast.

How often we observe the Lord's table is really left up to us. If we want to do it monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or weekly, fine. It doesn't matter. Our Lord says, "as often as you do it, you do it in this manner." It is the manner that is emphasized. Someone says, "But Brother Weaver, you don't understand. We want to do it weekly because we want to show our love for Christ." Well, if you want to show your love for Christ, why don't you do it daily? Why don't you do it hourly? You understand what I'm saying. Observing the Lord's table is not necessarily how we show our love for Christ. How do we show our love for Christ? Don't you remember what he said in 1 John 5 and verse 3? "And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

What did our Lord say in John 14? "If a man love me, he'll keep my commandments." Verse 24 says, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." You could say, in one sense of the word, that as we observe it properly, it does indeed demonstrate our love, but that is not the only way our love is demonstrated. The only conclusion we can come to from Scripture is this: as often as we do it—whether weekly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually—we are to do it in remembrance of the Lord and in honor to him, in the manner that he has prescribed.

Is that a condemnation of people who observe it weekly? No. Is it a condemnation of those who observe it quarterly? No. The frequency is left to the local assembly, but the manner is prescribed by God.

Servers of the Lord's Supper

Now, let's look at the servers. This point has also been a bone of contention among believers. If we are going to have the Lord's table, who is to serve it? Tradition says elders or deacons. When I say elders or deacons, that would be opposed to the laity. In other words, elders or deacons are usually considered ordained, and the people are not considered ordained.

So here is the question: Is it unbiblical to use unordained men to serve the Lord's table?

Acts chapter 6, verses 1-7, tells us a great deal. "And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased, and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

This is the passage that most people will tell you is where you find the first deacons in the Bible. The only problem is that none of these men were ever called deacons.

It is true that the word diakoneō is used in verse 2, but none of these men are ever called deacons in the Bible. Moreover, the Bible does not indicate that any of these men were ever ordained. What the Bible does say in verse 2 is that the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, "it is not reason we should leave the word of God and diakoneō tables"—serve tables. The word diakoneō is an infinitive from diakonos. It is where we get our English word deacon, and it literally means to serve or to be a servant.

It is obvious that these men were selected in order to take care of the widows of the church, because the widows were complaining that they were not getting their share of the food. Verse 1 says, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there was a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." In other words,

they thought perhaps the Hebrew women were getting a little more food than the Grecian women.

There was a problem. Look in verse 2: “Then the twelve called the multitude.” We are talking about the twelve apostles. They called the multitude together and said, “Look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” Look in verse 3.

Watch this. You know what most churches do when it comes to the selection of deacons? They vote on them. Suppose Henry wants to be a deacon and Hobie wants to be a deacon. The church holds a vote, and whoever gets the most votes becomes the deacon. That is how churches do it.

But if these men were deacons in the Bible, never call them deacons. Verse 3 says, “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” The apostles said to look out men who fit these qualifications; then they would appoint those they wanted to use.

Why is this important? Suppose Henry despised me, did not want to help me, and did not want to work with me, but you voted him in as a deacon. What have I got? I have somebody on my hands that I have to fight just to get things done. That is what many churches do: they force deacons on preachers when those deacons are diametrically opposed to everything the preacher stands for.

If you are going to say these were deacons, then the preachers appointed them after they met the qualifications. I told you that none of these men are called a deacon in the Bible. Stephen, a little later, is preaching. Philip, in Acts chapter 8 and chapter 21, verse 8, is called an evangelist.

It is true that there is an office of a deacon in the New Testament. You will find that in Timothy chapter 3 and in the book of Titus. It is also true that the word deacon means servant. Deacons are supposed to be servants of the church in general and servants of the pastors in particular. Why? If you are going to call these men deacons, please tell me why these first men were originally chosen. Look in verse 3: “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest

report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

"But we," that is, the apostles and preachers, "will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word." Go back to verse 2: "It is not meet that we should leave the Word of God to serve tables." If these men are called deacons, what were they primarily to do? They were to take the load of mundane things off the preachers so that the preachers could give their time to studying the Word of God and prayer. They took care of the little things that got in the preacher's way of studying and praying.

Deacons as Servants, Not Rulers

Traditionally, deacons have served the Lord's supper. But that does not mean they are the only ones capable or qualified to serve it. A deacon is a servant. John Gill, another famous Baptist preacher, said that a deacon must serve three tables: the table of the poor, the table of the Lord, and the table of the pastor.

How many modern-day deacons do anything and everything but serve? In the average church, the deacons do not serve; they run. They run the church, sometimes run the pastor off, run the finances, and run everything. I have spoken with pastors about holding a meeting in their buildings, and a pastor would say, "I sure would love to have you, but I've got to check with the deacons first to see if we can have this meeting." Are you not the pastor of the church? How in the world did we get from servant to running everything?

To understand that elders and deacons may serve the Lord's table is one thing. To say that they are the only ones who may serve is quite another. When you lay down a law mandating that only elders and deacons may serve the Lord's table, I believe you have gone beyond the Word of God and begun to establish that which the Lord hates.

Look in your Bibles at Revelation chapter 2, verse 6: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." Skip down to verse 15: "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." This is the Lord speaking to the churches.

He says, “You have them among you that hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Then, in verse 15: “You got some among you that hold their doctrine, which I hate.” What is he talking about—the Nicolaitans? The word refers to the destruction of the people. It is based upon Nicholas, meaning “conqueror of the people.” The Nicolaitans were a sect charged with holding the error of Balaam, casting a stumbling block before the church of God by upholding the eating of things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication. More than that, they established a division between the clergy and the people.

Let me ask you a question. In what church particularly do you see the clergy elevated high above the people? The Catholic Church. That is the attitude: “You cannot understand anything. I have to tell you everything. You cannot read the Bible for yourself or understand it. You need a preacher to explain it to you.” There is this division.

I understand that the office of a pastor is above the people in one sense of the word; you have to have an office with authority. But does that mean that I am so far above you that you cannot understand anything unless I tell it to you, and that you cannot do anything unless I tell you to do it? No. That is not what it means.

When you have a division between the clergy and the people, look at what is happening. First Peter 2, verse 5, says, “Ye also,” and he is writing to Christians, “ye also, as lively or living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Who is the holy priesthood? The people of God.

Revelation 1, verses 5 and 6, says, “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests, unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

When you begin to set up a division in which one group of clergy, the ordained, can do things while the other people cannot do anything and are not considered part of them, that is part of what the Lord hates.

Here is my position, and I will explain it. I believe that godly men may serve the supper, equally as elders and deacons. Ask yourself this question: What about churches that are so small they do not have deacons? If deacons are the only ones who can serve the Lord's Supper, what do those churches do? Do they not observe it until they can get a deacon or two there?

Godly Character Over Ordination

I just heard about a man who was running for deaconship in a church, and the man was a known fornicator. My question is this: Which do you think is more pleasing to the Lord—to have an ordained man serve the table who happens to be a fornicator or ungodly, or to have a godly man serve the table who happens not to be ordained? I don't know about you, but I believe I'd take the godly man over the ordained man any day of the week. It is one thing to say that elders and deacons may serve. It's quite another thing to say they're the only ones who can serve. Nowhere in Acts chapter 6 are these men called deacons. We assume that.

The frequency of the observance is left to the pastor and to the needs of the people. If the people say, "We need it more than once a year," fine. If they want to have it quarterly, fine. If they want to have it monthly, fine. That's no problem. The problem is not the frequency, but the manner in which it is observed. When we come to observe the Lord's table and do it simply as a ritual, a ceremony, or something to do, it's wrong. The manner must be right. The servers, whether they're ordained or not, must be godly men—not simply men who happen to be ordained and are living ungodly lives.

There's no straightforward command in the Scripture that says you must do this weekly or monthly, and only these may serve. What we need to do is put our hearts and minds together and say, "We will do it quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or ever how often." However often we do it, it must be done biblically and in the manner that Christ has ordained.

Closing and Upcoming Topics

The next three messages are going to be vitally important as we talk about the elements in the Lord's Supper. Our thinking will be

challenged from the Word of God, and we will see a lot of things. Let's pray.

Father, we are so thankful today for Jesus Christ. We're thankful for the principles in the Word of God. We're thankful for the teaching of the Word of God. Help us, Lord, to honor thee in all that we say and do. And we ask, Father, your direction and blessing in this assembly. And help us, Lord, to meet the needs of your people in observing the Lord's table in the manner in which you have prescribed. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 7

The Lord's Supper

Part Seven

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 11:20-29 (KJV)

Let us open our Bibles today to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Let us begin reading there with verse 20. We are not going to read a lot today simply because I have a lot of information for you. 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 20: "When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating everyone taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and drink in, or despise you 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 broke 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 often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For

> as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show 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 the 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 to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Review of Previous Studies

Let us review and tie things together so we can see the progress we have made. The Lord's Supper is indeed an ordinance, a sovereign ordinance since God himself instituted it, and a gospel ordinance since it gives us the realities of the gospel. We have looked at the names of the Lord's Supper in the Bible, its significance under the various meals represented there, and the partakers of the Lord's Supper—those who are qualified to partake. We have also looked at the reproof that the Apostle Paul gave to the Corinthian church because of all the divisions, which resulted even in division in the Lord's Supper.

There were personal divisions, pastoral divisions, judicial divisions, intellectual, spiritual, social, and cultural divisions. Let me say it very plainly: Corinth was indeed a problem church. The Apostle Paul not only had to write them two letters, but also had to visit them personally.

In our last study, we looked at the time and the servers of the Lord's Supper. I believe the key phrase concerning the time is, "as often as you do it." He said, "this do in remembrance of me." Concerning the servers, I pointed out that traditionally deacons have always done it, but the Bible does not require that. Rather, I believe a godly man should be used to help in it. If you have a deacon who is a godly man, wonderful. But there have been plenty of deacons I know who are ungodly men, so I believe God requires godliness in this service.

Introduction to the Elements

Today we begin our study of the elements involved in the Lord's Supper. Which elements, or what elements, were used by Jesus

Christ? What were the elements our Lord used when he first initiated and instituted the supper? What elements has the Christian church used throughout the centuries? Does it matter whether or not we use the right elements? Does it matter whether or not we substitute for the elements?

The Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of the Passover. That does not mean it is identical with the Passover; it is a totally separate institution. But if you read Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22, you find that this supper was instituted at the end of the Passover meal. Understanding this should give us, in all probability, a simple understanding of what elements our Lord used when He instituted the Lord's Supper. Let us begin with the elements, and first we will deal with the bread.

The Bread: Unleavened

The Bible says plainly that He took bread, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "Take, this is my body, which is broken for you."

The word for bread is the Greek word artos, translated in our Bibles as bread, loaf, or showbread. Artos refers to food composed of flour mixed with water and baked. It is also used of the bread that Israelites used in the form of an oblong or round cake that could be cut or broken in pieces. The word was also used of the loaves consecrated by our Lord, and of the bread used at the love feast and at the Lord's Supper.

The Bible tells us that Jesus took bread. Where did He get it? The answer would have to be from the table on which they had been eating. Therefore, when He took the bread, the Passover bread was unleavened. Very obviously, the bread had to be unleavened bread.

Undoubtedly, Christ took the bread from the Passover table. Matthew 26:26 says, "And as they were eating," referring to the Passover meal, "Jesus took bread and blessed it and break it and gave to the disciples and said, Take, eat. This is my body." Who is the "they"? It evidently refers to the disciples, because when we look at 1 Corinthians 11:25, the Apostle Paul tells us, "After the same manner also he," Christ, "took the cup when he had supped." Christ evidently had finished His meal. The disciples may have still been eating, but

since He had finished His meal, He took the bread and instituted the Lord's Supper. The bread, then, was taken from the Passover table, which meant it was unleavened bread.

Matthew 26:17 says, "Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread." What is that? That is the Passover. So very obviously the bread was unleavened. Exodus chapter 12 gives the institution of the Passover. Beginning with verse 8, though we will not read the entire passage, it says: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, with the purtenance thereof. And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning you shall burn with fire."

"And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover." Then, skipping down to verse 14: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial. And you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread."

The Liquid in the Cup

There was to be no leaven found in the house. The bread of the Passover was unleavened. Our Lord took the bread and very clearly used it to institute the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, the Bible tells us that even Jesus Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. There should be no discussion and no misunderstanding concerning the bread. It was, it should be, and it must be unleavened bread. We would not even think of changing it or consider replacing it with cookies or doughnuts.

Why would we not do that? First of all, it would spoil the type, because Jesus Christ—and oftentimes leaven in the Bible is a symbol of sin—is the sinless Son of God. Why was it required to be unleavened? Because when you use leaven, you are mixing evil with it. That is why we will not substitute doughnuts, cookies, light bread, or things like that. It would not only spoil the picture, the emblem, and the type, but we would also be arrogating to ourselves authority that we do not have. Jesus Christ is the one who instituted the Lord's

Supper, and He instituted it with unleavened bread. No one has the authority or the right to change that element, nor any of the elements.

The Liquid: Wine, Not Grape Juice

Secondly, consider the liquid. What was in the cup that our Lord used when He instituted the Lord's Supper? I believe the liquid in our Lord's cup was wine, pure and simple. I did say wine, W-I-N-E. Please listen carefully: wine is wine. Fermented wine is a redundancy. If it is wine, it is fermented. If it is not fermented, it is not wine.

I know that many Christians and many preachers will howl and whine over this point, but please listen carefully. Do not challenge me until I finish the next two messages. Then, if you want to challenge me, that is fine. I am going to show you, and I believe prove to you from the Bible, that it was indeed real, genuine wine. Immediately, someone is going to say, "But now, Brother Weaver, I read my Bible."

If you go to Luke 22, there you have the institution of the Lord's Supper, just as you have it in Matthew 26 and in the book of Mark. When you get to Luke 22, you may be surprised because the Bible says very plainly that it is the fruit of the vine. Look in your Bibles at Luke chapter 22 and verse 18. The Lord's Supper is in view; remember verse 17 as well. Look what our Lord says: “And he took the cup and gave thanks and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.”

You may say, “Well, there it is, Brother Weaver, fruit of the vine, grape juice, plain and simple.” No, not plain and not simple. You must understand the figures of speech used in the Bible. E. W. Bullinger has a book, about three inches thick, devoted entirely to the figures of speech in the Bible. I am not going to go over all of them, but there are metonymies, ironies, metaphors, synecdoches, hyperboles, allegories, parables, and a host of others. Certain things in the Bible cannot be understood unless you understand the figures of speech.

Let me give you two of them. The first is a hyperbole. Many of you know what a hyperbole is. The Greek word hyper means over, above, and beyond, while balein means to cast or to throw. What, then, is a hyperbole? It is something cast or thrown over and above. Basically speaking, it is an exaggeration so that you will understand the greatness or vastness of something. Let me give you a good illustration of a hyperbole.

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 1 and verse 28. Now you remember how the ten spies brought back an evil report. Look what they said: "Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there."

Did those walls literally reach into heaven? No. That is a hyperbole. They were great walls, big walls; they may have been taller than the average city wall, but they did not literally reach into the heavens. The phrase, "walled up into heaven," is there for you to understand that they were mighty walls, but they certainly did not reach into heaven.

You can find hyperboles all through the Bible. It is a figure of speech, like saying, "If I have told you once, I have told you 10,000 times." Have I ever told you anything 10,000 times? No. It is a figure of speech, a hyperbole, meaning that I have told you something many times. Nobody has told anyone something 10,000 times. It is simply a figure of speech.

What is a metonymy? The Greek word meta means "with," and onoma is the Greek word for "name." The word metonymy means "with name," or the same as a name. A metonymy occurs when the matter or substance of a thing is given for the thing itself.

Let me say that again: a metonymy occurs when the matter or substance of a thing is given for the thing itself. Here are several biblical illustrations. Look first to Nahum, one of the minor prophets, chapter 2 and verse 3. In fact, let me read verses 1 and 2 so that you can see the context: "He that dasheth in pieces has come up before thy face. Keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For the Lord hath turned away the

excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel. For the emptiers have emptied them out and marred their vine branches."

Now look: "The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet, the chariot shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken." We are discussing a picture of warfare. Here the Bible says, "The fir trees shall be terribly shaken."

Now how horrified would you be if you were in a walled city and saw soldiers come up, grab all the fir trees, and start trying to shake them? You would not be too afraid, because, especially if a fir tree were that big around, they could not shake it. What does it mean when he says, "The fir trees shall be terribly shaken"? Lances and spears were made out of fir wood. They are shaking their lances; they are shaking their spears.

So here is a metonymy: the matter or substance of something is put for the thing itself. Since the lances and spears were made out of fir wood, "the fir tree shall be terribly shaken." That is a metonymy.

Look in your Bibles, if you would, to Lamentations 3:7. Here is another metonymy. Jeremiah says, "He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy." Guess what the word "heavy" is? It is the word "brass." He hath made my chain brass; he made my chain brazen. In other words, when he says, "He hath made my chain heavy," he means that his bondage has been made hard, cruel, and heavy. He has made his chains brass. Very obviously, if you are chained and have heavy chains on, you are suffering. That is a metonymy.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 132:11. The Scripture says, "The Lord has sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." What is the fruit of his body? It is a child—a male heir, a descendant. When he says, "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne," the matter or substance is put for the thing itself. He is talking about a child, a male descendant. That is the metonymy.

Look in Psalm 127:3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." What is the fruit of the womb? Is it a puppet, a baby doll? No, it is a baby. The fruit of the

womb is his reward. Here the substance or matter of something is put for the thing itself.

Genesis 49:11 says, "Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." If he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes, are not his garments and his clothes the same thing? Of course they are. What is the blood of grapes? It is wine. What is wine? It is the blood of grapes. Verse 12 shows that he means wine: "His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." So it is a metonymy. When our Lord said in Luke 22 that He would no longer drink of the fruit of the vine, that is metonymy, where the substance or matter is put for the thing itself. The fruit of the vine is wine; it is not grape juice.

There is no way in the world that, in those days, grape juice could have been prevented from fermenting. To prevent it, refrigeration would have been necessary, and they did not have refrigeration. Therefore, the fruit of the vine was wine.

The Analogy of Faith and Sola Scriptura

As we dig our way through this subject, we must remember that our interpretation of Scripture must conform to the analogy of faith. We cannot take one passage, such as Luke 22 and the fruit of the vine, and say that it means grape juice when, very obviously, in other passages of the Bible it does not mean grape juice. We have to consider each passage in the analogy of faith, in the general teaching of the entirety of the Word of God.

The Bible gives us this principle in 1 Corinthians 2:13: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." We compare Scripture with Scripture until we find out what the analogy of faith really is. Therefore, we cannot maintain that the fruit of the vine in Luke 22 is grape juice when other passages of the Bible say it is wine.

First of all, let me say this: the issue of using wine in the Lord's Supper will, I hope and pray, do at least three things for us. What are

the three things this issue will do for us? First, hopefully, it will make us search the Scriptures for ourselves.

You remember what the Apostle Paul taught in Acts chapter 17? He commended the Bereans: “But these were more noble than those in Thessalonica.” Why? “In that they searched the word of God daily, whether these things were so or not.” First, this ought to make us search the Scripture and compare Scripture with Scripture for ourselves. Secondly, it will test our fidelity to Scripture.

We have said all along, Sola Scriptura—that is, the Scriptures alone are our sole authority for faith and practice.

Now, let me ask you a question: Are the Scriptures in reality your sole authority for faith and practice, or do you include, “Well, that’s the way I was raised,” or, “This is what I’ve always believed”? It will test our fidelity to Scripture. Thirdly, it will test our submission to Scripture. Will we bow to the Word of God, or will we fall back upon what we have always been taught, what we have always believed, the way we have been raised, and the way we have always done it? There is a big difference between submission to the Word of God and tradition. Isaiah 8 in verse 20 says this: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

I want to give you a quote because I can tell you this firsthand. Whenever we hear something new or different, we automatically tend to shut our minds and say, “That cannot possibly be true.” But can you imagine the difficulty Martin Luther and those men who followed him had in their day, coming out of a thousand years of darkness, not having the Word of God read, but believing the church and the church fathers? I want you to listen to what Martin Luther said. If you have difficulty bowing to Scripture, consider these words. Martin Luther writes:

“No one will believe how great an ordeal it is and how severe a shock when a person first realizes that he must believe and teach contrary to the fathers, especially when he sees that so many excellent, intelligent, and learned men, yes, the best of them, taught thus, holy men like Saints Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. I too have often experienced this shock. But in spite of this, that one man,

my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, must have greater weight with me than all the holiest people on earth put together. When we think of the false doctrine of priestly celibacy, for example, we see how true it is that virtually the whole visible church, including the best people in it, can fall under the spell of error."

What then, asks Luther, shall we condemn these men? No, I do not intend to condemn Benedict and others, he says, but I do propose to take their books and carry them to Christ and his word as a criterion for comparison. If their doctrine agrees with the gospel, I shall accept it. If not, I shall say, you may be a holy man, but you will never subject me to your rule, for it is a human Bible. Therefore, let the devil adopt it. I do not want it. Strong words, but they are true words.

Luther said this should have been our policy long ago. How different the sad history of the church would have been if we had followed this course. All of these learned, godly, holy men are not simply to be believed; what they say must be compared to the Word of God. If it agrees with the Word of God, fine; I will bow to it. If it does not, I will refuse it. Let the devil have it. It is a human dogma.

The whole Reformation really and truly turned and hinged on this one principle: sola scriptura. The Word of God alone is to be our sole authority for faith and practice. Listen to what the Westminster Confession of Faith says: "The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined and whose sentence we are to rest can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures."

Proper Attitude Toward Scripture

Does it matter how holy? Does it matter how ancient? Everything is to be tried by the Scriptures. The Scriptures alone are to be our sole authority for faith and practice. Whatever the Scriptures teach us, we must believe it and submit to it, whether we understand it or not, or whether we agree with it or not.

Many of you heard old Lester Roloff when he was alive. I love that man. Lester Roloff was not a theologian or a scholar, but he could warm your heart like no one else could.

I loved to hear Lester Roloff sing, though he could not sing. His heart was so full of the love of the Lord. I heard him on the radio one time dealing with Ephesians 1:4, where it says that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. I knew Lester Roloff did not understand anything about the doctrine of election, but I thought, "I'm going to listen to him. I'm going to see what he has to say." When he came to Ephesians 1:4, Lester Roloff said, "Now, the Bible says we were chosen in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world."

Then he said, "Now, folks, I can't explain it. My mind's not deep enough to understand it, but I believe it and I bow to it," and he went right on. I thought, Isn't that a wonderful, gracious attitude? He may not have been able to comprehend the doctrine himself, but if the Scripture said it, he was going to bow to it; he was not going to fight it. Would it be wonderful if all of God's people refused to fight against the Word of God and simply learned to bow to it?

The reason I said it is going to take two more weeks to finish this message is that next week I want to bring a message entitled "Wine, Its Condemnation and Its Commendation." You will find that wine is both condemned and commended in Scripture. The following message will answer questions and deal with objections. I want you to understand that we are going to be honest with Scripture and look at both the negative and the positive concerning the use of wine, especially in the Lord's Supper.

General Principles on Wine Use

Today I want to lay down a number of general principles in order to begin the study. When I teach that the liquid in the Lord's Supper should be wine, because that is what our Lord used, I am not advocating an all-out wine or alcohol drinking spree. It is not my intention, purpose, or aim to encourage anyone to throw all caution to the wind and engage in the use of alcohol.

The same Scripture that commends the use of wine in certain situations also condemns the abuse of wine in every situation. We must understand that there is a proper use of alcohol and a misuse of alcohol. In fact, that is true with practically everything in our life: there is the proper use and there is the abuse.

I understand that when I teach this, some may wrest the teaching to their own destruction. However, that does not make the teaching untrue or the doctrine wrong. We must teach the truth and preach pure doctrine, even if some abuse it, misuse it, and wrest it to their own destruction. Why do we continue to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do not some abuse it? Yes. Do not some misuse it? Yes.

Do not many refuse to believe it? Yes. But it is still true and accurate. It is my responsibility to teach the truth, and your responsibility to use the truth correctly. The perversion and misuse of any doctrine does not nullify its veracity—that is, its truthfulness and its scripturalness.

For instance, are fornication and adultery rampant in our world today? Of course. They are a misuse and abuse of the sanctity of sex. Just because there are fornicators and adulterers does not nullify the sanctity of sex in marriage. Are there thieves and robbers in this world today? Yes. Just because there are thieves and robbers does not nullify the right of private property. I can still own and possess things, even though someone may try to steal from me.

You do not throw out a doctrine simply because some abuse and misuse it. Are there rebellious children in this world today? Of course there are. Does that mean we should quit teaching children, “obey your parents in the Lord for this is right, honor thy father and thy mother for this is the first commandment with promise”? No. It means that teaching needs to be given even more. Heresies and perversions of any doctrine do not mean that the doctrine should not be taught; rather, they emphasize the need for the truth to be taught even more.

Please understand that I am not advocating or saying that an unbridled and unwise use of wine is in any way pleasing to God. It is not. However, I am saying that the liquid in the cup should be wine.

As I shall show you before I close today, there is a difference between the religious use of wine and the social use of wine.

My first general principle is this: saying that the liquid in the Lord's Supper should be wine does not mean I am advocating that everybody throw all caution to the wind and go out and buy sixteen bottles of wine. I am not saying that at all.

Secondly, I especially want to warn and admonish our older children and teenagers. Listen carefully to what I am about to say. You may understand the proper use of wine and the proper use of alcohol, and you may not abuse or misuse it; however, that does not mean you may use it without the consent, knowledge, and approval of your parents.

I don't care how old you are. I don't care if you are 21. If you are living at home, you are under the authority of your parents. Children are commanded to be under authority, even teenagers and older teenagers. So although there may not be anything wrong biblically with a glass of wine, it would be wrong if you did it without the knowledge and consent of your parents, because then you would be in rebellion against them. The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right," and, "honor thy father and thy mother."

The act of drinking a glass of wine is not sinful in itself. But if you act without the consent, knowledge, and approval of your parents, it is rebellion, and it is sin. Just because you know the truth about something does not mean that you have the right to use it if you are under the authority of your parents.

Thirdly, the Bible does teach moderation in all things. The Bible says in Philippians 4:5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Since the Bible teaches moderation in all things, that would certainly include the use of alcohol. But this does not mean that we have to drink alcohol or that we must drink it on social or regular occasions.

I've never had a beer in my entire life. I made that statement to one individual, and they said, "Well, it's about time you had one." I said, "No, I've lived 61 years without it. I can live 61 more without it." I have no desire for it. It's just that simple.

The only occasion that I would normally have any alcohol is either ecclesiastically or medicinally, and those are proper uses for it according to the Bible. Although it is not a sin to use alcohol, as it is commended in Scripture, that does not mean that we must use it on every occasion, or on any occasion other than the Lord's Supper. I've been around weddings and in other places where they serve wine, and I usually would never take a glass. In fact, if they are serving it, I usually would not even have a glass of tea, lest someone think I was drinking it. I just don't want to do it.

Foregoing Christian Liberty for the Gospel

The social and occasional use of wine or alcohol falls into the area of Christian liberty. We may be free to use it, but that does not mean that we have to use it. If Ed is having a glass of wine and can do it without becoming drunk or abusing it, he is free to have a glass of wine. I am also free not to have a glass of wine. Just because he exercises his liberty in that area does not mean that I have to exercise mine.

There are several reasons given in the Bible whereby we may forego the lawful exercise of our liberties. Here are three reasons given in Scripture whereby we may normally forego the lawful exercise of our liberties. First, look in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. The first reason why we may forego the lawful exercise of our liberty is for the furtherance of the gospel. There are times when you may have liberty to do something, but it may not be expedient or best for you at that particular time.

In 1 Corinthians 9:5, the apostle Paul asks, “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?” Did not Paul have the absolute right to get married if he wanted to? That is what he is saying. Did he not have the ability to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles, the brethren of the Lord, and especially Cephas, that is, Peter?

When they say Peter was the first pope, Peter had a wife. Paul specifically says this, and there is an instance in the Bible where our Lord healed Peter’s wife’s mother. Why did Paul not have a wife? Let me put it to you very bluntly: she probably would have slowed him

down. Paul said that, for the furtherance of the gospel and all he had to do, he did not want to be tied down. There is a biblical teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 on three reasons why you should not marry and three reasons why you should marry.

Single people have several advantages over married people, but married people also have several advantages over single people. The Apostle Paul said, "I have a right to get married if I want to, but for the furtherance of the gospel, I'm not going to do that." He wanted to continue his missionary journeys and hectic schedule and did not have time for a wife then, but he had the right. So you may forego the lawful exercise of your liberty for the furtherance of the gospel.

The second reason you may forego the lawful exercise of your liberties is for personal holiness. Look in Matthew chapter five and verse 30 at what our Lord said: "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." One reason we can forego the lawful exercise of our liberty is for personal holiness. Our Lord said, if something offends you, do not mess with it. Get away from it. Cut it off.

We are so prone to follow our feelings, our lust, and our desires. But if I have a problem with lust and covetousness, do I need to forego the lawful exercise of my liberty to visit the beach in the summer? I would say yes, wouldn't you, if I have that problem? Somebody else may not have that problem. If I have an exceeding desire for chocolate, what should I do? I ought not to visit chocolate stores on a regular basis if I know I have a real propensity for it. Alice wants one of these shirts just to give me the chocolate and nobody gets hurt. It reminds me of Stonewall Jackson.

He had been out on a reconnaissance mission and came back so chilled, shaking from the cold and damp, that his doctor insisted he take a swallow of whiskey. When Stonewall took that swallow, he made a face. The doctor said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, General Jackson. Is it that bad?" Jackson said, "No, no, it's that good. I've always liked it."

That is why I never touch it. He knew he liked it, so he stayed away from it—not because it was unlawful, but because, for the

exercise of personal holiness, we may forego the lawful exercise of our liberty. This may be done for the furtherance of the gospel, for personal holiness, and, thirdly, for the benefit of the weaker brother.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” The word expedient is the Greek word sumphero, which means profitable or to be good. He said, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are necessarily profitable for me.” Therefore, I will not be brought under the power of any. That is what he is saying in this passage.

I like ice cream. I do not care what flavor it is; I just like it, and I enjoy eating it occasionally. If it is in the refrigerator, I will eat it. If it is not there, I will not. Consequently, my wife does not buy it very often. Although there is nothing wrong with eating ice cream occasionally, there would be something wrong with sitting down and eating four or five quarts at one time.

This is what he is saying: all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. I am not going to do it, and I am not going to be brought under the power of any. We may therefore forego the lawful exercise of our liberty for the furtherance of the gospel, for personal holiness, and for the benefit of the weaker brother. This teaching is found in 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14.

We cannot encourage someone whom we know to be a weaker brother to do what we do. If we encourage him to do what we are doing, knowing that he is a weaker brother, it would be sin. We must always consider the weaker brother.

It should be clearly understood that while the Bible does not condemn the proper use of wine or alcohol, there is no constraint and no command that one must drink socially or regularly. In the proper setting, one may have the liberty to partake in a biblical manner. At the same time, others have the liberty to abstain in the proper manner.

There is a difference between the social and the ceremonial, religious, or ecclesiastical use of wine. The social use of wine or alcohol is in the area of Christian liberty. The ceremonial, religious, or ecclesiastical use of wine is by command and example.

Religious vs. Social Use of Wine

Look in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 14. Without going into great detail, you remember that when I dealt with biblical wealth, I taught you that there were three tithes in Scripture. There was the Levitical tithe, the ten percent that went to the teaching Levite. There was the poor tithe, ten percent taken every third year, or three and a third percent per year, which went to the poor. Then there was another ten percent tithe, the tithe of rejoicing, or the festival tithe. That tithe went to the family, and the family used that money for themselves as a kind of Christian vacation when they went to Jerusalem for the feasts.

Deuteronomy 14 is dealing with the tithe of rejoicing. Beginning with verse 22: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed that the field bringeth forth year by year, and thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose to place his name there," which was Jerusalem, "the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of the flocks that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." God says you are going to take this Christian vacation and come to these feasts so that you may learn to fear the Lord thy God always.

Now look at verse 24: "And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou shalt not be able to carry it"—you cannot drive your oxen too far, and you cannot carry a lot of heavy stuff—"or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose."

Then verse 26 says, "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatever thy soul desireth. And thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thine household." If you want a T-bone steak, have it, says God.

If you want a fresh leg of lamb, you may have that. If you want a bottle of wine, you may have that. If you want strong drink, you may have that. Does that mean you may get drunk? No. Does it mean you

may eat foods forbidden by God? No. Does it mean you can sin and rebel? No.

"And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever." In other words, you may eat a T-bone steak if you want it, but you may not want it. You may drink wine if you want it, but you may not want it. You may have yayin or strong drink, but you may not want that either. This is in the realm of freedom and liberty. They were free to have it, not abuse it, but they were also free not to have it. This was what we would call a social use, or, in one sense, a ceremonial use—not a ceremonial use, but simply a social use at these feasts.

Now turn to another passage. Begin in Exodus 29, where we find the ceremonial, religious, or ecclesiastical use of wine. Do not try to determine the usage of the Hebrew and Greek words, because I have studied yayin, chemer, enos, and tirosh. I know what they mean and can show you verse after verse where tirosh and enos are used. But the word here is wine.

Look in your Bibles at Exodus 29, beginning with verse 38, so that you can see what God commands: "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar." God is demanding this to be offered upon the altar: "Two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, the other lamb shalt thou offer at even. And with the one lamb, a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering."

What did I just read? God said, "I want a fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering" in this daily offering. Look in your Bibles at Leviticus 23, verse 13.

God says, "And the meat or the meal offering thereof shall be two-tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor, and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of the hin."

Numbers 15:5 says, "And the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with a burnt offering or sacrifice for one lamb." Verse 10 says, "And thou shalt bring for a drink offering a half a hin of wine for an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto the Lord." Here the offering requires a half a hin of wine.

First Chronicles 9:29 speaks of the Levites: "Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices."

Now let me ask you a question. Let us go back to the Old Testament. You and I are priests. God says that one lamb is to be offered in the morning, with a fourth part of beaten oil, two-tenth deals of flour, and a quarter hin of wine. Suppose I look at you and say, "I think we'll use grape juice. What do you think?" And you answer, "Yes, I think we are. Let's substitute it." If we substituted it, would it have been accepted by God? Of course not. When God demanded wine, the priests did not have the liberty to make a substitution.

The point is this: if God used wine in His offerings, if wine was used in the Passover—and it was—and if wine was initially instituted in the Lord's Supper—and it was—do we have the right to change it to grape juice?

And the answer is no.

Now, consider this application: if wine is commended in the Bible, and the church for centuries used wine in the Lord's Supper, how did it get changed to grape juice? I will answer that question, but it is an interesting one. The change to grape juice was relatively recent in origin.

As we begin to look at the use of wine in the Bible, we must ask ourselves: What is your attitude? What is my attitude? Is it one of rebellion, defiance, or unbelief? Or is it one of submission to Scripture? We may not always understand, and we may not always agree, but we must always submit to the Word of God and trust God for further understanding.

I urge you, especially in the coming week, to keep an open mind as we look at the Scriptures and see both the condemnation and the commendation of wine in the Bible, so that we can see its proper use and its abuse. Then we will know exactly, I believe, what God would have us use in the elements and how He would have us live our lives, while honoring and glorifying Him.

Let's pray. Father, we are thankful for Jesus Christ this day, and we are thankful for the Word of God. We are thankful, Lord, that Your Word is clear, concise, and precise. I pray that You would give us grace to bow to it, believe it, and apply it. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 8

The Lord's Supper

Part Eight

“When you come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating everyone taketh before others his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and drink in, or despise you 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 have delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘Take ye, this is my body, which was 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 often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come.’”

Introduction and Review

We are going to cover an awful lot of ground. This is part eight on the Lord's Supper. We have looked at the names given to it in the Bible,

its significance, and the different kinds of meals that it represents. We have looked at its partakers and at the reproof the Apostle Paul gave these Corinthians, who were dividing over the Lord's Supper as well as over numerous other things.

Last week we began to look at the elements. First, I pointed out the bread. There was absolutely no discussion upon it because, very obviously, it was unleavened bread taken from the Passover table. We went back and looked in the Old Testament, where God required it to be unleavened. Then we began to deal with the liquid. I said that it was wine and not grape juice, and I went down through the Bible and showed you that there is a difference between the social use of alcohol and the religious use of alcohol.

Wine, Its Condemnation and Its Commendation

I also dealt with this phrase in Luke 22:18, where Jesus told His disciples that He would no longer drink the fruit of the vine until He drank it new with them again in the kingdom of God. When I bring the last message in this series, I am going to deal with that verse particularly. But I told you that the phrase “the fruit of the vine” was a metonymy. A metonymy is where the matter or substance of a thing is given for the thing itself. We went through the Bible and saw where “the fruit of the body,” “the fruit of the womb,” and the fir trees are all metonymies, and we looked at them in the Bible.

I showed you once again that there is indeed a difference between the social use of alcohol and the religious use of alcohol. The social use fell under the area of Christian liberty, and I gave you three reasons why we could forego the lawful exercise of our liberty: for personal holiness, for the furtherance of the gospel, and out of consideration of the weaker brother. But I also showed you different passages where God commanded wine to be used in those offerings, and there was no substitution available. There was no choice in it; it had to be just as God commanded. We looked at Leviticus 23:13, Numbers 15:5 and 10, and a multitude of others where God demanded wine.

Sin Resides in the Heart, Not in Matter

Today I want to bring a message entitled “Wine, Its Condemnation and Its Commendation.” Or you could say, its use and abuse.

Evil, or sin, does not exist in matter. Nothing that God created is inherently evil in and of itself when we are speaking of matter. God created everything in the world, and behold, it was good. So evil does not reside in matter. Alcohol is not evil in and of itself, even in its most potent form. I will explain this more thoroughly next week.

Sin resides in the heart of man, not in material things. Once you begin to locate evil or sin in something material, then you have gone into paganism to the nth degree. Sin is in man; it is not in matter. But there is indeed a condemnation in the Bible of the abuse and misuse of wine.

Condemnation of the Abuse and Misuse of Wine

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and get ready to look at some passages. Before we read the Scripture, let me make this statement: Drunkenness, vileness, lewdness, and all acts associated with the abuse and misuse of alcohol are condemned in Scripture. Paul makes that exceedingly plain in 1 Corinthians 6.

Beginning with verse 9, Paul says, in plain and simple language, something you ought to know: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now pay close attention to verse 11. Notice the past tense: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Such were some of you refers to what they had been in times past. They have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

What does the Apostle Paul say? Do not be deceived about this thing. There is no drunkard who is a Christian. There is no

whoremonger who is a Christian. There is no adulterer who is a Christian. There is no abuser of himself, a sodomite, who is a Christian. Do not be deceived about this thing.

Listen to me plainly: there is no such thing as a Christian drunkard. Does that shock you? That is what Paul is saying. There is no such thing as a Christian drunkard. There is no such thing as a Christian prostitute. You may have been some of these things in times past, but no longer. You have been washed, sanctified, and justified.

There is no such thing as a Christian becoming a drunkard. I did not say that a Christian could not get drunk. Certainly a Christian can get drunk, and if he does, it is sin, wicked, and vile. But there is no such thing as a Christian becoming a drunkard—that is, someone who is constantly and continually drunk. God condemns drunkenness.

I'll explain this more next week as well. But I want you to look in your Bibles to Proverbs 20 and verse 1 because we're looking at the condemnation of wine and you're going to see that every time that wine or alcohol is condemned it is usually the abuse and misuse of it that is condemned. Notice in Proverbs 20 and verse 1 the Bible says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Now look what he says, "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

Proverbs on the Consequences of Drunkenness

Now the drunkard is the man that usually scoffs at that which is holy and righteous. Strong drink causes one to rage. And what Proverbs 20 and verse 1 is telling us that the one who abuses alcohol, his desolate madness, breaks through the limits of morality and he is a wicked, wicked man. Anyone who is brought under its spell, anyone who is brought under its slavish desire and subjection to it is deceived. That's what he's saying. So he's not necessarily condemning wine, but he's condemning the fact that those who are deceived by it are brought under its spell, and they are the ones that are always improper, profane, and mockers, and they are raging. Now look in Proverbs 23 and verse 21. In fact, we are going to look at

two passages. Proverbs 23 and verse 21. He says, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

Now watch that passage very carefully. "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

Now look in Proverbs 26 and verse 9. Here's another verse talking about drunkenness. "As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools." Now let me just point out that these two passages, Proverbs 23 and verse 21, and Proverbs 26 and verse 9 demonstrate the result and the abuse of alcohol. Note if you would what is associated with the result of the misuse and abuse of alcohol. It is laziness, poverty, and pain that always accompanies the misuse and the abuse of alcohol.

Drunkards usually will not work. Or if they do work, they don't work very long. They work just long enough to get them some money, and then they're off hitting the bottle again somewhere. I remember there was a gentleman who used to come to our farm every summer and work. He had no home. He traveled around the world, so to speak, but not really the world. It was either Georgia or Florida. Because of the off-season, he would—when there were no crops coming in in Georgia, he'd be down in Florida picking oranges or doing something.

The man was a drunk. I never will forget that he would work just long enough to get a little bit of money, and then he was gone for a week or two. Then he would come back and work some more. But he never had anything. Although he was related to a cousin of mine, you could never depend upon him for anything.

Now, this is exactly what the Bible is saying. Look back in Proverbs 23 and verse 21. What does he say for the drunkard? And the what? “Glutton shall come to poverty and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.” Do you realize there are three things being condemned in verse 21? What are they? Drunkenness, gluttony, and laziness. Those three things are put on a par in Scripture.

It is not just the abuse and misuse of alcohol that is condemned; it is also the misuse and abuse of food, and the misuse and abuse of rest. God says they are going to be brought into poverty.

If you look in Proverbs 23, beginning with verse 29, I suppose this is one of the leading passages in the Bible showing the condemnation of the misuse and abuse of wine. “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast, that is, the top of a ship. They have stricken me, thou shalt say, and I was not sick. They have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.”

This passage gives an absolutely perfect picture of a drunkard: woe, wounds, poverty, contentions, pain, and enslavement.

Fornication and idolatry, or fornication and perversions, are usually involved with drunkenness and the misuse and abuse of alcohol. Many times a drunkard does not even know who he is with or what he is doing. That is why it says, “thine eyes shall behold strange women.” You do not know where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing.

I have a pastor friend who, before God saved him, was a drunkard. He was a big man, while his wife was about the size of Alice, or perhaps smaller. One night Bill came home absolutely stark raven drunk. He was so drunk that he fell down on the sidewalk out in front of his house. He never even made it into the house.

His wife saw him through the window. Somehow, that little woman got the 250 pound man up off the ground, put his arm around her shoulders and her arm around his back. She was getting him inside the house. In his drunkenness, Bill looked at his wife and said, "If my wife knew I was going home with you, she'd kill me."

I often said, “I’d have dropped that sucker right there. I’d have let him stay outside. It’s what I’d have done.” But that is what the Scripture says: You do not know who you are with, and you do not know what you are doing. God is condemning the abuse and misuse of alcohol.

The Lustful Look and the Danger of Desire

Look in verse 30. After asking, “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contention? Who hath babblings? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?” the Scripture identifies them: “They that tarry long at the wine, and they that go to seek mixed wine.” Usually, when you are seeking mixed wine, wine is mixed with other spices to make it more potent and stronger.

Now look at verse 31: “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.” You have to ask yourself this question: When God says, “Look not thou upon the wine because it is red,” or when it shows itself red, what does He mean? Red wine was the basic wine in the land of Canaan. It was the most sustained wine, considered the best in color and taste. It was good, beautiful to look upon, and bright.

Here is my question: Is it a sin to look upon a glass of wine? No. Is God forbidding us even to look at a bottle or a glass of wine? No. It is not unlawful merely to look at the wine. Rather, it should not be looked at with a greedy and covetous desire—that is, with a vehement desire. Such desire always leads to its intemperate use, abuse, and misuse. It is like our Lord said in Matthew 5:28: “Thou hast heard it said of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

"But I say unto you, whosoever looketh upon a woman"—is it a sin to look upon a woman? No. But he said, "whosoever looketh upon a woman, to lust after her." There is a difference in the way that you look. The same thing is stated in 1 Corinthians 7, verse one. The apostle Paul said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Does that mean I cannot ever touch you, shake your hand, or hug your neck? No. He is saying it is good for a man not to touch a woman lustfully, desiringly, wickedly.

It is the same thing here. He is not forbidding us to look at wine. He is saying we cannot look upon it lustfully and greedily desiring it. Now, look what he says in verse 31: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

In other words, do not let the beauty or attractiveness of it seduce you. There is an old saying: "He that drinks wine sets his eye upon the cup and the vintner sets his eye upon his purse." One is looking at the cup and the other is looking at the money.

He says, "Look not thou upon the wine when it moveth itself aright," that is, when it sparkles in the glass, when it would go down the throat pleasantly, and appears to the eye to be beautiful. He is condemning a greedy, lustful desire for it. John Trapp, the old Puritan, summed it up this way: "Many men die of the wound in the eye. Many men die of the wound in the eye. It is not unlawful to look, but because of looking comes lusting. Therefore, laws are to be laid upon our looks. If we do not let sin in at the window of our eye or by the door of the ear, it cannot enter into our hearts. The prohibition is not upon wine itself, but upon an intemperate and unlawful use of it."

Let me give you another interesting interpretation of this verse. When he says in verse 31, “look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright,” some scholars say that this refers to what is known as green wine. Not the color green, because he is talking about the color red, but green wine is a term given to wine that has not finished its fermentation process.

It is still fermenting, which means the bubbles are still coming up from the bottom of it. It is still in the process of fermenting, so it is called green wine. Oftentimes, winos develop a fungus in the linings of their stomachs and are annoyed by an irritating itch that they cannot scratch. How can you scratch the lining of your stomach? The answer is, you really cannot. But what the winos found out is that if they took green wine—wine that is not finished fermenting—and drank it, its bubbling and fizzing would give some degree of relief from the itch in their stomach lining. In other words, here are men so addicted to and so misusing and abusing wine that they are not

only drunkards, but are now trying to use green wine to scratch the itch they have internally.

What is the result of that? Look in verse 32: “At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” Serpents and adders are venomous; they kill. When you have gotten to that point, you are basically dead. Do you realize that drunkenness is always associated with adultery, idolatry, and uncleanness? Some are so addicted to alcohol that they are willing to sell their children for a drink. Joel 3:3 says, “And they have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine that they might drink.” They were willing to trade their own son for a harlot and their own daughter for a drink. Some older people remember a man named Mel Trotter. Mel Trotter was a drunk.

He's also the fellow who started, I believe, the mission in Chicago for drunks. Mel Trotter had stolen the shoes off his baby while she was in the crib, and he was on his way to pawn them so that he could get a drink of whiskey. When he heard an evangelistic service and people were singing, he thought, "Well, I'll go in just for a minute." He sat down, and God saved him. Here was a man who had stolen the shoes off his baby's feet and was on his way to trade them for a drink of whiskey. This was the condition from which God delivered him.

Habakkuk 2:15 demonstrates how some people use alcohol, not so that they may become drunk, but for immoral purposes: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look upon their nakedness." God is not talking merely about offering your neighbor a glass of wine. The passage describes someone who is not getting drunk himself, but is making someone else drunk for immoral purposes. The bottle is being used to produce drunkenness and expose another person's nakedness.

Once again, you can see how the abuse and misuse of alcohol is usually associated with adultery, fornication, and idolatry. Please listen: it is not wine or alcohol that is condemned in this passage, as in Habakkuk 2:15; rather, it is the abuse and misuse of it. It would be neighborly and righteous to give wine to a wounded man. In Luke 10:34, our Lord himself, speaking of the Good Samaritan, says, "And

he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." Our Lord is commending the Good Samaritan who used wine there, while condemning the man who used alcohol in Habakkuk 2:15. Thus the passage distinguishes the proper use of wine from its wicked abuse and misuse.

There are two totally different purposes. The abuse and misuse of alcohol is always wicked, wrong, and sinful. It is not only drunkenness that is condemned, though drunkenness is condemned. The misuse of alcohol in regard to adultery, fornication, and perversion is also condemned. Anyone who abuses and misuses alcohol in any way, shape, form, or fashion is brought under the judgment and condemnation of God. It is that simple. Does God condemn the abuse and misuse of alcohol? Yes. There is its condemnation.

Commendation of Wine in Scripture

Secondly, consider its commendation, or its proper use. One will search the Scriptures absolutely in vain for a condemnation of wine and strong drink. As I have pointed out, it is not wine and strong drink that are condemned; it is their abuse and misuse.

I remember, years ago, having to study out this subject of alcohol. I was a much younger preacher then, because this took place twenty-five or thirty years ago. When I had finished studying the Scripture and began to realize that God did not condemn wine or alcohol, but condemned the abuse and misuse of it, I automatically knew that the understanding I had reached was diametrically opposed to ninety-nine percent of the Baptist preachers in this land, and to many others.

So I thought I had better check myself. I went to a professor friend of mine who had taught me in college. He was a dear friend, and we have been friends ever since. I said, "Doc, let me ask you a question." This man had taught the Bible for more than fifty years, not counting his personal studies. He was in his seventies. When I told him the conclusion I had reached, I asked, "Now, am I right or am I wrong?"

He looked at me and said, "John, I wish that I could say that you were wrong, but I cannot." He added, "My father was a drunkard for most of his life and was converted only in his latter years."

He said, "I know the agony and the heartache of the abuse and misuse of alcohol can bring. However," he said, "to be honest with scripture, I have to say that you're right. Scripture does not condemn wine or alcohol; it condemns its abuse and misuse." Do you understand that throughout the Bible, when you just read, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, wine is always regarded as a necessity of life and not as a mere luxury? It was always a necessary part, even of the simplest meals.

For instance, look in Genesis chapter 14 and verse 18. Here is Melchizedek: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. And he was the priest of the Most High God." He comes out to celebrate Abraham's victory, and he brings forth bread and wine.

In Judges chapter 19 and verse 19, the Bethlehemite said, "Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses, and there is bread and wine also for me and for thine handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants." There is no want of anything. Notice what he said: "there is both straw and provender for our asses, there is bread and wine also." Some of these Scriptures are quoted, and some are given as references, because there are so many of them.

In 1 Samuel chapter 16 and verse 20, there is bread and wine. When you get to Isaiah 55, verse 1, an open invitation to the gospel, so to speak, what does God say? "Ho, let him who is thirsty come. Yea, let him come and drink water without money, without price. Yea, let him drink milk and wine." Wine was an indispensable provision for a fortress.

In 2 Chronicles 11:11, we find that they stored wine in their fortresses. Wine in the Bible was drunk by all classes of people and all ages of people, even children. In Lamentations 2:11-12, Jeremiah writes, “My eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth. Why? For the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children”—now he is talking about the children—“the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the

city. They say to their mothers, 'Where is corn and wine?' when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out under their mother's bosom."

So what are they asking for? They are asking for corn, or bread, and wine. In Zechariah 9:17, it is the same thing: "For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty. Corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids." So wine was drunk by all classes and all ages of people. Wine is always bracketed in the Bible as a basic staple. You will find that in Genesis 27:28, when Jacob was being blessed by his father: "The Lord bless thee with an abundance of wine."

Failure of the wine crop was considered a national calamity in Israel. In Deuteronomy 28:30 and 39, God promised that if they did not obey Him, He would curse their vineyards. You will also find in Isaiah 62:8, Isaiah 65:21, Micah 6:15, and Zephaniah 1:13 how the failure of the wine crop was considered absolutely disastrous to the nation and to the people. Wine is therefore bracketed with grain as a basic staple.

There are six or seven ways in which wine is commended in Scripture. Number one, wine is commended in that it is a special token of God's blessings. Wine is commended in that it is a special token of God's blessings. Genesis 27:28 is one example: "The Lord bless thee with an abundance of wine." This is the first way in which wine is commended in Scripture.

I will call out some of these passages, but I want you to notice a couple of them. In Genesis 27, verse 28, Isaac is blessing Jacob. He says, "Therefore, God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine."

In Deuteronomy 7, beginning with verse 12, we read: "Wherefore it shall come to pass if you hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant of thy mercy, and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee. He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thine kind, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee." You

will also find this in Isaiah 65, verse 8, and Amos 9, verse 14. The point is this: wine is referred to as a blessing of God.

Now look in Proverbs chapter 3, and find Joel chapter 2. Let me ask you a question after we read these passages. Most of us can quote Proverbs 3. Beginning with verse 5, the Word of God says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.” He is talking about tithing. “So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

What did he say? If you honor me, I will honor you. One of the blessings that I am going to give you is plenty of wine.

Look in Joel 2, beginning with verse 18, to see God's special jealousy and blessing upon His people: "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto His people, 'Behold, I will send you corn and wine and oil, and you shall be satisfied therewith, and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen.'" Now here is my question: If in the Bible wine is presented to us as the blessing of God—and it is—how can some people refer to it as the devil's juice?

Just stop and think about it. How can it be the devil's juice if it is presented to us as the blessing of God? Here is the second way wine is commended to us: wine is commended to us in that an extraordinary abundance of it is the token of the Messianic age. Look again at Joel 2, beginning with verse 18: "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto His people, 'Behold, I will send you corn and wine and oil, and you shall be satisfied therewith, and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen, but I will remove far off from you the northern army and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the East Sea, and his hinder part toward the Utmost Sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things.'"

All of this deals basically with the Messianic age. You will also find it in Amos 9, verses 13 through 15: "Behold, the days come," saith the Lord, "that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountain shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof. They shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord God.” You will find the same thing in Zechariah 9:16–17: an abundance of wine.

An abundance of wine is an example of the Messianic age. Do you remember the promise that every man shall sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree? Thus, an abundance of wine is a symbol of the Messianic age.

Number three, wine is commended to us in that it is given, listen carefully, to cheer the heart of God and the hearts of men. Do you remember how those offerings that God commended should be given to Him daily always had wine in them? Notice Judges 9:13: “And the vine said unto them, ‘Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?’” Which cheereth God and man. How could wine be said to cheer the heart of God? Evidently, it was that wine that God demanded in His offerings.

Psalm 104:14–15 says, “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.” Note, “and wine that maketh glad the heart of man.” Those drink offerings that were given to God evidently cheered His heart. The Bible says that there is nothing wrong with a moderate cheering of the heart of man.

In fact, it is not considered sin or reprehensible. You'll find that in, let me just give you the scriptures, 2 Samuel 13, 28, Esther 1, 10, Ecclesiastes 9, 7, Ecclesiastes 10 and verse 19, and Zechariah 9, 15,

and 10, 7. In fact, I want to turn in my Bible and just read to you from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 9. Look, if you would, please, Ecclesiastes 9, 7. He says, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." What does he say? "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God accepteth thy works." Now look in 10 and verse 19, Ecclesiastes 10 and verse 19. "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry, but money answereth all things." So there's nothing wrong then, he says, with wine cheering the heart of God or of man.

So it's commended to us in that sense. I'm not going to ask you to turn to any of these passages, but I do want you to listen. There were a multitude of godly men and women in the Bible who used wine properly and were never condemned for it. Melchizedek and Abraham, Genesis 14. Isaac and Jacob, Genesis 27. Jesse and Saul, 1 Samuel 16. Abigail and David, 1 Samuel 25. The Israelites who came to make David king with a perfect heart, they're in 1 Chronicles 12. Solomon and Hiram, 2 Chronicles 2. Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 33. Nehemiah, Nehemiah 2.

Esther in Esther 5 and 7. Paul and Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 5, Daniel in Daniel chapter 10, and even the Lord himself in Luke chapter 7. These are just a few examples of where wine was used and used properly. And those who used it were not condemned and were not considered reprehensible. So nowhere in scripture then is there a moderate and improper use of wine condemned. However, the abuse of it is always condemned in scripture. Number five, wine is commended in scripture for its medicinal properties, both externally and internally. Now, we look at Luke 10 and verse 34, where he poured wine into the wounds of that man. Well, in all probability, he gave him some internally as well. I don't know.

The Bible does not say that. But if you look in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 23, you'll find that Paul did commend wine to Timothy. Notice if you would please 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 23, he said this, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." So there is a medicinal use of wine as well. Drink a little wine for thy stomach's

sake and thine often infirmities. Do you realize there are some countries that it's unsafe to drink water in?

I remember that my father-in-law was in World War II. He went plenty of places where he was not allowed to drink the water. If you drank the water, you got sick or nearly died. The same thing is true when you go down to Mexico now: drink the water, and usually you are in trouble. But he said, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

You realize that all medicine is alcohol-based. You cannot have a medicine, a pharmaceutical, without its being alcohol-based. I was preaching in New Jersey, and while I was there for the meeting, I was going to help ordain a friend of mine into the ministry. He had a little cold, cough, hack, or whatever, and reached into his coat pocket. He pulled out a little bottle, tipped it up, and put it back in his pocket.

Teasingly, I said, "John, why don't you just go ahead and get a bottle of wine and drink it?" He said, "I would never do that." I asked, "You wouldn't?" He answered, "No, sir." I said, "Let me see that little bottle you just put back in your pocket." I read the label: "35% alcohol." I said, "You know a bottle of wine only has 10 or 12 percent. The reason you don't drink wine is that you don't want to cut down on your intake."

I was just teasing him, but do you realize how much alcohol is in NyQuil? My father used to swear by that stuff. He said, “Son, you get a cold or something, you take some of this, you’ll sleep.” I looked at it: forty percent alcohol. No wonder you’ll sleep. I have heard people say all my life, “Well, I don’t want to drink a glass of wine.” I would rather have a glass of wine for stomach trouble than take a pill whose contents I do not know. I am just saying that there is a commendation of wine here when it is used correctly, even medicinally, in this particular point.

Wine for the Depressed and Dying, and Abstinence in Certain Cases

Wine is also commended in Proverbs 31 by being recommended for the depressed and the dying. Notice Proverbs 31, verses 6 and 7:

“Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of a heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”

Now what does God say? Give strong drink unto those who are ready to perish, and wine to the heavy-hearted. Do you know why our Lord was given wine on the cross, mingled there with spices? When He tasted it, He would not take it. That is what they would do: give it to dull the pain, just as one might receive a shot of morphine or other drugs. That is what this is saying.

So wine is commended for those who are depressed and for those who are dying. I am not going to make you turn to these other passages, but there is also a commendation of wine in the sense that there are times when abstinence is demanded. Since you are in Proverbs 31, look at verses 4 and 5. It is recommended that kings, or those in authority, abstain when they have momentous decisions to make: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink. Why? Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”

I had a fellow come to our church one time who had served under five presidents. He was White House security. He brought a program on the Living White House and told me that LBJ often made momentous decisions after drinking a whole pint of whiskey straight. He was basically a drunkard, is what it amounted to. God says, “No, no, you don’t do that.”

Priests were required to abstain from wine or any alcohol while they were ministering in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. After they completed their service, according to Numbers chapter 18, they were to have the best of the wine. But while they were ministering to God, they had to abstain. Likewise, the Nazarite who took the vow had to abstain from drink.

I want to be honest with Scripture. Not that, as an individual, I care to drink; I could really care nothing about alcohol in and of itself. But I do want you to see this. In 1 Timothy chapter 3, Paul lays out some of the qualifications for elders and deacons. In verse 3 he says, “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.” The pastor must not be one

who is given to wine. Does that say, “Don’t drink any wine at all”? No, it does not.

Verse 8 says, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.” “Not given to much wine” in verse 8 and “not given to wine” in verse 3 are basically the same. What that text simply says is this: the elder and the deacon cannot be one who uses wine as an excuse. “The reason I got mad, or upset, or cussed is that I had too much wine to drink.” No. God said that a pastor or an elder cannot be one who uses wine as an excuse for his actions.

What 1 Timothy 3 condemns is an intemperate and unlawful use of wine. It is not saying that preachers cannot have any wine at all. Read Albert Barnes, John Gill, or any commentator, and you will find that every one of them will say, basically speaking, that what is forbidden here is for the pastor to use wine as an excuse for his actions: “I just had too much to drink.”

Do you realize that this is also the excuse most drunkards give when they do something wrong? “Well, I didn’t know what I was doing. I just had too much to drink.” So 1 Timothy chapter 3 does not forbid wine to a pastor or to a deacon. Wine is commended in Scripture by the condemnation of its abuse. We have already looked at that. One last point: wine is commended in Scripture by its being given for ceremonial and ecclesiastical use.

Turn to Leviticus 23, a passage we read last week, and also to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, which is our text. I want to show you why wine is commended as being given for ecclesiastical, or religious, use. In Leviticus 23:13, the Bible says: “And the meal offering shall be two-tenths deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour, and of the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin.” Wine was given to God in the offering.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 11:21, where the Apostle Paul condemns the abuse and misuse of wine in the agape and in the Lord’s Supper: “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Do you know what the word “drunken” is? The Greek word is methuo, which

means literally to be soaked with wine or alcohol. What were these people doing? They were getting drunk while observing the Lord's Supper.

What does that tell us? First, it tells us that wine was used. Second, it tells us that the same apostle who commended wine on different occasions condemned its misuse here. It is not wine that is condemned; it is the misuse and abuse of it.

This word "drunken" is also the word used in Acts 2:15, when the apostles were accused of being drunk with new wine. Someone may say, "God has promised us new wine. New wine is not fermented." But read Acts 2:15: it is fermented, because they were accused of being drunken on new wine.

Biblical Position and Application

Now, you have its condemnation, and you have its commendation. Let me make two applications. What is the biblical position on wine? What is the biblical position on alcohol? Here it is: Alcohol, like anything else, should be viewed as a gift and as the blessing from God, as long as it is used as it is commanded and commended in Scripture. However, at the same time, we must despise and detest its misuse and abuse. In other words, both views are to be held simultaneously. You have to understand that the biblical position is this: You understand wine, you understand alcohol, and you view it as the blessing of God and as a gift of God on the one hand, as long as it is used as God commanded and as it is commended in the Bible; but on the other hand, you have to despise and detest any and all misuse and abuse of it. Period. That is the biblical view on wine and alcohol.

The second application is this. Listen to me carefully as I give you this application. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 21. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours." He is writing to the Christians at Corinth, and he says, "For all things are yours." Let me ask you a question: How much belongs to Jesus Christ? Everything. Do you remember the Bible in Romans chapter 8 says, "So then we are joint heirs with Christ"? Well, if we are joint heirs, what does that mean? We get everything, too. Whatever Christ has, we have.

Now watch. He says in verse 21, “Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours. And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” How much has been given to you and me as Christians? All things. Look in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 17: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

Now, my question is this: How much has been given to us? All things. How much has been given to us to enjoy? And the answer is, all things.

Let me make the statement very plain. In reality, I believe that it is only a Christian who can use and enjoy all of God's creation, and use it without abusing it and without perverting it. I do not care whether you are talking about wine, food, sex, or marriage, because only a Christian has had his heart regenerated and renewed, knows the Word of God, and knows that he is to do everything in faith for God's honor and God's glory. Only God's people are able to use without abusing and to use it rightly for God's honor and for God's glory.

If we have been given all things in Christ, that is what He said: whether this world, or things present, or things to come, it does not matter; all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. So everything is secure in Him.

Our attitude concerning wine, our attitude concerning alcohol, should be this: as long as it is used as God commands it, and as long as it is used as God commends it, it is right and proper. But at the same time, we have to despise and detest any abuse and iniquity of it. For we do not live to ourselves, but we live unto God, who shall judge the quick and the dead.

Father, we do ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would help us, that You would teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Thank You, Lord, for Your Word and Your truth. We do pray, Father, for these that Janet has mentioned in the prayer request earlier, and all of those who are traveling. We pray, Lord, against the abortion and the murder in this land, against the wickedness and the ungodliness. We pray, Father, that You would give us grace that we

may serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and that we would bow to Your Word and submit our hearts to it. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

The Lord's Supper

Part Nine

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, let's begin reading with verse 20, and we'll read just several verses and then begin.

“When you are come together, therefore, to one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating every one taketh before others his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken. What have you not houses to eat and drink in, or despise you 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 breaketh and said, Take ye, 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 stopped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood. This do you as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's...”

Especially for those who are visiting with us today, let me just simply say that I have been preaching on the series on the Lord's Supper. This will be the ninth week in a row, and hopefully, Lord willing, next week will be the final week on this subject; then we will be moving on to several other things.

Introduction and Review

But I want to take just a moment and review, especially for those who are visiting today. We've looked at the names of the Lord's Supper in the Bible. We've looked at its significance under the heading of the different kinds of meals that are mentioned in the Bible. And, of course, then we looked at the partakers of it, which was two particular messages in itself. Then we looked at the reproof that the Apostle Paul gave. And then, of course, we began to look at the elements.

I have been dealing with the elements for the last several weeks because this is probably one of the most controversial parts of the series. We understand from the Bible that the bread was unleavened bread. But I have also shown you from the Bible that the liquid in the cup was not grape juice, but wine. That was what they drank at the Passover, and that is what our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper with.

We then began to look at the usage of wine in the Bible. There is a vast difference between the social use of alcohol and the religious use of alcohol. The social use of alcohol falls within the area of Christian liberty. As long as you do not misuse or abuse it, you may be free to have a glass of wine; but you are also free not to have a glass of wine.

When it came to the offerings—for instance, in Leviticus 23:13 and Numbers 15:5 and 10—where God demanded a fourth or a half of a hin of wine with the offerings, the priest could not substitute. Here was a religious use of wine.

I will deal next week with the vow of the Nazarite and the abstinence of the priest when he was in the tabernacle and in the temple. But let me point out that when our Lord said in Luke 22:18, "I will drink no more the fruit of the vine until I drink it anew with you in the kingdom of my Father," that is a metonymy. The

substance of a matter is put for the thing itself. We looked at that in Genesis 49 and other passages of the Bible. We saw that fir trees was a metonymy for lances. The fruit of the body, or the fruit of the womb, is a metonymy for the child, the children, or an heir.

So it is indeed a metonymy. Last week we looked closely at the Bible under the heading, “Why its condemnation and its commendation.” We went through the Bible and showed where any and every abuse and misuse of alcohol was condemned over and over. It is not just drunkenness that is condemned; it is indeed the misuse and abuse of it.

Sin Does Not Exist in Matter

Wine can be misused by making other people drunk for immoral and wicked purposes, as Habakkuk chapter 2 points out, and in Joel chapter 3, where they were selling a boy for a harlot and a girl for a glass of wine. All of this is condemned in the Bible. But then we look at its commendation, and there are many passages in the Bible that commend wine. I showed you the way in which that wine was commended.

The interesting thing is this: the same Hebrew words used concerning wine or alcohol—chemer, tirosh, yayin, and whatever—when dealing with the condemnation of alcohol are also used in its commendation. We are talking about the same substance.

My position in all of this is that I want to be exceedingly biblical. I want to condemn that which God condemns, and I want to commend that which God commends. I cannot condemn that which God commends, nor can I commend that which God condemns. The biblical position is simply this: we must view wine, or alcohol if you want to use it as that, as a gift and blessing from God only as it is used the way that He commands and the way that He commends. Any abuse and misuse of wine must be despised and detested, and these two positions must be held simultaneously. Last week I pointed out in 1 Corinthians 3 and in 1 Timothy chapter 6 how only God's people can, in reality, use anything biblically and scripturally, because of the grace of God that is in us.

Today I still want to deal with some objections and questions concerning the use of wine, real alcoholic wine, in the Lord's Supper. I am not talking about going out to a bar or having a bottle of wine in your home; I am talking about using wine in the Lord's Supper.

Sin Does Not Exist in Matter

Let me begin by emphasizing the first point. I hinted at this last week, but today I want to develop it. I want you to understand that sin does not exist in matter. People have referred to alcohol as “the devil's juice.” They say it is wicked, wrong, and ungodly. Certainly, it has been abused and misused many times, and the people who misuse and abuse it are wicked and ungodly. But whenever you locate evil or sin in anything material, you have fallen into Greek philosophy.

You are not following the Bible teaching. The Greeks taught a system of dualism. In Greek philosophy, they had a dichotomy, a distinction between matter and spirit, or soul and body. They viewed matter as inherently wicked and evil, while only the mind or soul was exceedingly pure. Thus, because of this false Greek philosophy, you have the rise in Christendom of all these sects and cults: the Gnostics, the Pietists, the Ascetics, the monasteries, and the nunneries. All of these were based upon Greek dualism, not upon the Word of God.

Do you remember why those monks in the monasteries would beat themselves with whips, cut themselves, and make their bodies suffer? They thought their bodies were inherently evil. They were trying to drive the evil out of their bodies so that they could be cured in body and soul as well. If the body, the earth, or any kind of matter is inherently evil, then according to Greek philosophy it must be purged, avoided, and despised.

I remember when I was in college, I had a class in philosophy. We had to talk about Plato, Socrates, Diogenes, and all these men. I sat in that class and thought, This is the dumbest stuff I have ever heard in my life. Why do I need to know anything about Greek philosophy? Why do I need to know anything about Roman philosophy? I had a little agenda when I was in college. Those courses that I loved, I

made A's in. Those courses that I hated, I made sure that I made an A in because I did not want to have to repeat them.

I hated philosophy until I got out of college and started reading the Scripture. Then I found out that there is indeed a biblical philosophy. Phileo is the Greek word for love, and sophia is the Greek word for wisdom. The word philosophy simply means a lover of wisdom. God is wisdom incarnate; therefore, He is the chief philosopher. So, if you despise philosophy, you despise God. Once you begin to see how heathenistic or humanistic philosophy has intertwined itself in Christianity, you can see the perversion in Christianity and how there have been changes all down through the centuries.

When I understood that, I saw the importance of understanding philosophy. Neoplatonism—the word neo means new—is from Plato. Platonism simply means the new teaching of Platonism. It is very prevalent and prominent today, and it is a mixture of Greek dialectical dualism, which pits the spirit against the flesh and the body, and the soul against mind and matter.

It crept into the church in the second century AD through the root of Gnosticism. Gnosticism is based on the Greek word gnosis, which means to know. The Gnostics basically taught salvation through a secret knowledge. That is why you have all these secret cults today. They are nothing but Gnostic cults, is what it amounts to. The Gnostics were a heretical group, and they viewed matter as inherently evil.

They had a real problem. If God created the world, and the world is made out of matter, then the world must be evil. If God created the body, and the body is made out of matter, then the body must be evil. Their problem was this: How could a holy God create that which was evil? Some of the Gnostics developed a system of demiurges, or what you and I would call semi-creators. They said that the one true and living God created a demiurge under him who was not pure spirit like himself, had some matter in him, and the second demiurge created a third, the third created a fourth, the fourth created the fifth, the fifth created the sixth, the sixth created the seventh, and the seventh happened to be Jesus Christ. The seventh then created the

world. Thus, they removed God from his creation because they believed that matter was inherently evil.

This led to a number of very vile and wicked applications. Those Gnostics known as Docetics—from the Greek word dokeo, which means to appear, or I appear—said that Jesus Christ was not real, but merely a divine apparition. Why? Because matter is inherently evil, so he could not have a real body.

That is why John wrote 1 John 1, saying, "We have seen him, we have handled him, and we have touched him." In other words, Christ is real, genuine, and does have a body. This was the position of the Docetics: Christ was not a real human being. The book of Colossians, as well as 1 John, is written directly against Gnosticism.

But there were the Corinthians as well. They said, "If matter is inherently evil, and it is, while the mind and spirit are pure, we cannot get rid of the body, so we might as well eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." They would indulge the flesh and get into everything known to man.

You see, there were all these divergent philosophies. There were people in the second century who claimed to be Christians yet abused and misused their bodies. One example was Simeon Stylites, who climbed onto a pillar and stayed there for about twenty years, just up on the rock.

He was purging his body. Let me give you one illustration. Rushdoony, in his book Flight from Humanity, gives an excellent illustration. It is not a very thick book, but a little paperback. R. J. Rushdoony's Flight from Humanity. If you want to understand Neoplatonism, you need to read that book. Here is his account of how biblical Christianity became mixed with Platonism and Greek philosophy, and you can see the horrible consequences.

He says, "For a Christian, the lives of the saints are sometimes painful reading. Intelligence and faith are sometimes wedded to the most ludicrous practices and to ideas alien to biblical religion." Here is his example: "When after a very hot journey, Jovinus washed his tired feet and hands in very cold water, and then stretched out to rest, the holy Melania rebuked him. Melania approached him as a wise mother approaching her own son, and she scoffed at his

weakness, saying, 'How can a warm-blooded young man like you dare to pamper your flesh that way?'

"Do you not know that this is a source of much harm? Look, I am sixty years old, and neither have my feet, nor my face, nor any of my members except for the tips of my fingers have touched water, although I am afflicted with many ailments and my doctors urge me. I have not yet made concessions to my bodily desires, nor have I used accounts for resting, nor have I ever made a journey on a litter." Sixty years old and never took a bath.

Rushdoony has one more sentence: "We learn nothing about biblical holiness from Melania, although we do begin to realize what the odor of sanctity might mean." Why would a sixty-year-old woman not take a bath? Why would she not rest her body? Because she thought that body was inherently evil, and she was not going to do anything that would pamper the evil. Now listen to me, folks: matter is not inherently evil. What does that mean? It means alcohol is not inherently evil. There is nothing evil in and of itself.

Matthew 15 gives the clear teaching of our Lord. Beginning with verse 15: "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable." Verse 16: "Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?"

Now look what he says: "Do you not yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed what? Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man." When our Lord says that which enters into the mouth and goes into the body does not defile a man, He means that it is that which comes out of the heart. In other words, the heart is sinful, wicked, and ungodly.

If you say that alcohol is evil in and of itself, then you have to throw out all of our medicines because they are alcohol-based. You would have to throw out all your herbal tinctures because you have to have alcohol to make one, and all your homeopathic medicine

because you have to have alcohol for that. If alcohol is evil in and of itself, then you could not taste it, touch it, or take it in any shape, form, or fashion without taking sin into your body, which is absolutely ridiculous.

Alcohol does not make drunkards any more than guns make murderers and spoons make obesity. The sin is in man. It is not in that which is material or in matter. Sin is in the heart of man. It is man's rebellious, wicked, ungodly heart that always abuses and misuses everything. It is man and his rebellion against God. The answer is not prohibition, but regeneration and conversion.

Did Prohibition stop drunkenness in 1919 and 1920? No. The Eighteenth Amendment never stopped drunkenness. There were more drunks and more alcohol sold then than ever before.

One of my dear friends was a godly Christian woman, and she had a husband who was unsaved. You cannot cut it any other way: he was a drunk. That does not mean that he stayed drunk all the time; he did not. But about once a month, he had to pitch himself a good drunk. Other than that, he was a wonderful provider, a lovable, likable, amiable individual. He would give you the shirt off his back. You enjoyed being around him, except, of course, when he was drunk.

Alcohol and the Weaker Brother

One day I was talking with his wife, trying to encourage her. She knew better, but she said, “Pastor, he is such a good man. If he would just quit drinking, everything would be all right.” I looked at her and said, “How can you say that? The problem is not his drinking. The problem is his wicked heart. If he quit drinking today, his wicked heart would find another avenue to abuse and misuse and pervert something.” You follow me? Get the heart right, and everything else turns out right as well.

Sin does not exist in anything material. It does not exist in anything that is made of matter. Sin is in the heart of man. It is our rebellion, our wickedness, and our ungodliness.

The second thing I want to cover is this: alcohol and the weaker brother. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 14. We are going to

look at this passage, and you might want to go ahead and find 1 Corinthians chapter 8, because we will be turning there as well.

Alcohol and the Weaker Brother

There is a passage that most people take out of context: Romans 14:21. The Apostle Paul said, “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” This passage is often quoted by individuals who say the Bible demands total abstinence. But the Bible does not demand total abstinence. The Bible demands, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” There is certainly a religious use of wine in the Bible. Nevertheless, this statement is usually quoted by those trying to make total abstinence a requirement for every Christian.

They argue that it is the duty of the strong to abstain out of deference to the weak. In other words, they say that even a very careful and temperate use of wine contradicts the apostolic principle in Romans 14:21.

You have to ask yourself two questions. The first is this: “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” What is the weaker brother, or who is the weaker brother?

What does it mean to cause someone to stumble or to cause him to offend? I encourage you to read all of Romans 14 when you get home. In Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, Paul means something entirely different by the weaker brother than those who teach total abstinence mean by the weaker brother.

Their understanding is this: suppose someone has recently been converted. Let us suppose that he used to be a drunkard. Thankfully, this is not true of Doc, who is sitting close to me, but let us suppose that he used to be a drunkard. Now God saves him, and they say, “We cannot use wine in the Lord’s Supper, period, because it is going to set him off. He is trying to stay free, and he is trying to totally abstain from alcohol. If we give him any, it will set him off again, and he will end up being a drunkard.”

That is their understanding of a weaker brother. But the weaker brother in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 is not the man who tends to drink too much. The weaker brother is the one who will not drink at all; he is the total abstainer. Consider Romans 14: "Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to the doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things, another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him."

The man in Romans 14 and the man in 1 Corinthians 8—the weaker brother—is an individual who has a scruple of conscience. His scruple is that meats and wines are evil in and of themselves. Therefore, he will neither eat nor drink them, because he believes that they are inherently evil. It is the stronger brother who recognizes that this is not true. The weaker brother is weaker because of his unscriptural convictions and his unbiblical thinking. He believes that if he eats or drinks, it is sin. The Bible shows this distinction clearly.

It is not the act of eating or drinking that Paul is dealing with as sin here. The sin comes when a person eats and drinks against his conscience, without faith. Romans 14:23 says, "And he that doubteth is damned, or condemned if he eat. Why? Because he eateth not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

In this passage, the weaker brother is the one who will not drink at all and will not eat meat at all. Verse 2 says, "For one believeth that he may eat all things," and that is the strong brother. "Another who is weak eateth only herbs." He is the vegetarian. But note that this is not a health issue; it is a religious issue. In Romans 14:14, Paul says, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself." Is anything unclean of itself? Is anything sinful in and of itself? No. "But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." In other words, if a person has a scruple of conscience, it would be wrong for him to go against that conscience.

He is classified here as the weaker brother. Verse 20 says, "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure. But it is evil for that man who eateth with offense." Is eating and drinking

wrong? Is having a glass of wine sinful in and of itself? No. But if I have a scruple of conscience, believe that wine is evil, and then take it, I have sinned. In this passage, I am the weaker brother—the one who abstains from everything.

That is why the Bible says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Verse 22 says, "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Please do not take this out of context. I am not talking about the social use of wine right now; I am talking about the religious use of wine. The Bible says, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." If a person understands and knows the truth, his conscience will not condemn him.

The weaker brother in this passage, and in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, is the one who believes that eating certain meats and drinking wine is a sin in and of itself. It is not that this man has a propensity to drink or fears turning into a drunkard. He simply believes it is wicked and wrong in and of itself. Therefore, he is classified as the weaker brother.

Notice verse 21: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak." This verse does not advocate abstaining from meat or wine. It simply says that it is good not to do either if it will cause your brother to stumble, offend, or be made weak. According to verse 22, if you want to exercise your liberty when you are not around the weaker brother, have at it: "Hast thou faith, have it thyself before God, happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." But let us return to verse 21: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak." First of all, the word "stumble." The word "stumble" is from the Greek word proskopto.

Pros means to or toward, and kopto means to strike or to hit the foot. So when you strike or hit the foot, it causes you to stumble; that is, you are impeded in your journey. You are not walking uprightly. The Apostle Paul uses this word for anything that would hinder someone in their divine life—anything that causes him to halt, stumble, or slow down. That is the word for stumble.

Then he uses the word offend. The word offend here is from the Greek word skandalon, from which we get our English word scandal. A skandalon was the wooden stake on a trap that the animal triggered when he went into the trap and was caught. To scandalize someone means that they are ensnared or entrapped. Paul says that you must not ensnare someone or cause them to be entrapped.

Then he says, "or is made weak." The Greek word here is asthene, which means without strength or mental vigor, unable to distinguish between right and wrong, and clean and unclean. In other words, it describes someone who has an erroneous judgment or an erroneous conscience.

I have given you all those words to tell you this: the word offend is grossly misunderstood and misapplied today. Usually, we interpret offend to mean something that upsets someone or makes them angry. When someone comes to you and says, "That offends me," let me translate what they are saying: "I don't like what you're doing. Stop it."

Years ago, a woman came to me after I had grown my beard because of what the Bible teaches concerning a beard. I have had this beard for thirty-five years or longer. She said, "Brother Weaver, your beard offends me."

I smiled and then began laughing. I said, "Ma'am, there's no way in the world my beard can offend you, because you could not do what I am doing even if you had my knowledge." You see, I had just given a biblical explanation of the word offend. It means, basically, to encourage a weak brother to do what you are doing without his having your knowledge. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 8. Once again, this passage deals with the weak and the strong.

In verse 4, he says, "As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is none other God but one." Some Christians in the Corinthian church would be invited to a feast in an idol's temple. They would go in, eat the steak, and drink the wine because they ate and drank it as unto God and not unto the idol. They understood that the idol had absolutely no influence whatsoever on that meat. But there were some who used to worship

that idol, and they thought that somehow the meat was influenced by it.

Those are the weak brethren in this chapter. When you get to 1 Corinthians 9, he talks about that which is sold in the shambles. What was the shambles? The shambles was the discount meat market, right by the idol's temple. They could not use all the meat, so the priest would sell it at a discount. Instead of paying four dollars a pound for T-bone steaks, you could go to the shambles and get a good, wonderful steak for about fifty cents a pound. Some of these young or weaker Christians would say, "How can you do that? How can you eat that meat? That meat has been offered to idols."

Now watch what he says in 1 Corinthians 8, verse 4: "As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols." Look what Paul says. He is a strong brother: "We know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is none other God but one." What does a strong man have? He has knowledge.

Verse 5 says, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or earth, as there be gods many and lords many, but to us"—that is, to those who know the truth—"but to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him."

Now look at what he says; this will take some explanation: "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge." He is not saying that some Christians do not know there is only one God and one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is saying that not every Christian has the knowledge that the idol has absolutely no influence on that meat whatsoever.

Here is how I get that. Watch in verse 7: "For some with conscience," and the word there is literally syneidesis, "for some with habit or custom of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto idol, watch, and their conscience being what? Weak, is defiled." Or is it vile?

Now, what am I saying? Here is the weak man who, before he was converted, may have worshipped at that idol's temple. He thought that the idol had some influence on the meat. If he goes against his

conscience and eats it, he says, “I’m sinning against God because that idol has some kind of influence on this meat.”

Look at verse 8: “But meat commendeth us not to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse. But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours”—notice, it is a liberty—“become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man”—we are talking about the weak brother now, not just any man—“for if any weak brother see thee which hast knowledge”—you are the strong brother—“sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols.”

In other words, it is the strong who has the knowledge, and it is the weak who are ignorant. The weak will see the strong man doing something and say, “If he can do it, I can do it.” But the weak brother does not have the knowledge that the strong man has. He goes ahead and does it, and therefore wounds his conscience.

How can I avoid causing a weak brother to stumble? First, I can show him and teach him the truth according to the Word of God. If he understood the truth, he would no longer be a weak brother, would he? He would have my knowledge, or the knowledge of the Word of God. If he refused the truth, he would not merely be a weak brother but a rebellious brother.

Secondly, I am not causing a weak brother to stumble if I do not encourage him to go contrary to his conscience, even though his conscience may be misinformed. If Doc is my weak brother, and I know what that weakness is, but do not encourage him to go contrary to it, then I have not caused him to stumble, offended him, or made him weak.

If I exercise my liberty somewhere else, that is my business, not his. I have not offended him or caused him to stumble. Remember what I told you last week: I can never surrender the principle of liberty. But the Bible gives us three reasons why we may forego the lawful exercise of our liberty. I do not have to eat meat. That is what Paul said. Meat does not make me a better Christian, nor does it make me any less of a Christian. I do not have to eat meat, and I do not have to drink wine.

Why would you upset someone or tear something up over something so simple? As long as I am not encouraging him to go contrary to his weak conscience, it does not matter what I do; I am not offending him or causing him to stumble. Look in Romans 14:3: “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not. And let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him.”

God gives obligations to the weak brother and obligations to the strong brother. It is the tendency of the strong to despise the weak—to look down at Doc and say, “Oh Doc, come on, don’t be a baby. Come on, grow up.” That is an attitude of despising where he is. But if he looks at me and says, “I don’t see how you can do that and be a Christian. You must not be saved,” what is he doing? He is judging me.

God says, let not the strong despise the weak, and let not the weak judge the strong. If I exercise my liberty when he is not around, he has no right to judge me, because I am not encouraging him to go contrary to his conscience. Furthermore, if I continue to exercise my liberty while warning him not to violate his conscience, I still have not caused him to stumble or offended him. If he goes contrary to his conscience while I am encouraging him not to, that is his sin, not mine. I am responsible for my actions, not his.

The word offend, in the context of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, means that you encourage someone to do what you are doing without their having your knowledge, while they think what you are doing is sinful, wrong, and wicked. In reality, it is not; their conscience is simply misinformed.

Before proceeding further, I want to deal with one of the main objections to using wine in the Lord's Supper. I have already hinted at it. So many people take the weak brother argument to an absolute extreme—indeed, to an unbiblical extreme. They say that the weak brother is a former drunkard and that tasting wine in the Lord's Supper might set him off and drive him back into drunkenness. First, understand that this position views wine as evil in and of itself, when it is not. It is not the wine; it is the wicked heart. Matter is not inherently evil. Sin is not in matter; sin is in the heart.

Refuting the Former Drunkard Objection

Secondly, stop and think about it. That position teaches that sin is greater, stronger, and more powerful than the grace of God. If the grace of God was great enough and sufficient enough to bring him out of his sin, is it not sufficient enough to keep him from returning to his sin? If there has been genuine and true repentance, there could not possibly be a turning back.

Third, inherent in that position is a denial of the power of the Holy Spirit. If we have been sealed unto the day of our redemption, as the Word of God says in Ephesians, can the Holy Spirit not keep those who are committed to his trust? What about 1 John 4:4? Is it not true: "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"? Is not 1 John 3:9 true? "Whosoever is born of God cannot sin"—that is, he does not continually commit sin. Why? "For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin"—that is, he cannot continually sin. Why? Because he has been begotten of God.

It is the grace and mercy of God that keeps us from going back. You say, "Ah, but Pastor," and I want you to turn to 1 John 2. I can quote it, but I want you to see it. You say, "I know of someone who was a professing Christian. He went back, and one taste set him off; today he is a drunkard." If that is so, you need to read 1 John 2:19. Look what John said: "They went out from us." They left us. Why?

"But they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." What did John say? If you left us, you never was one of us to begin with. The Lord's salvation was not there. The grace of God was never there. Remember, there are people who reform themselves.

Our Lord spoke about that: the man who cast the demon out of himself, so to speak, and the demon left. What happened? He came back and found his house swept and garnished, and he took seven spirits more wicked than himself with him when he went back in. The truth of the matter is that those who have been saved, according to Jude 1 and verse 1, are preserved in Jesus Christ.

There is no such thing as a Christian drunkard. There is no such thing as a Christian prostitute. If the grace of God is in you and the

power of the Holy Spirit has sealed you, you are not going to return to your sin and wickedness. That is all there is to it.

The Case of the Rechabites

Let me cover one other thing before I close today: the case of the Rechabites. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites are mentioned many times by the prohibitionists as examples. Look in verses six and seven; in fact, let us read verse five: "And I said before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine and cups, and I said to them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine. For Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons, for ever. Neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any."

"But all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land wherein you are strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, and all that he has charged us to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters, nor to build houses, etc." You may read the rest yourself.

The case of the Rechabites is frequently brought up to say that we should emulate them because they drank no wine. But if you apply Jonadab's rule and commandment to us, we are in a great deal of trouble. First of all, Jonadab had nothing to do with us. He told them, "You shall drink no wine, you shall not live in houses, you shall plant no vineyards, you shall live in tents, you shall be nomads." If we are obligated to keep Jonadab's commandments, as some would say, do those who teach total abstinence from wine not live in houses? Do they not plant gardens? Do they not plow fields?

SCRIPTURE READING - Jeremiah 35:15-17 (KJV)

> The point I'm trying to make is very simple. If you're going to take one of Jonadab's commandments and say this applies to everybody, what about the rest of the commandments that Jonadab gave? Jonadab has nothing to do with us. You and I cannot say that Christians today are obligated to keep the commandments of Jonadab. Why did God give us this example? Let me show you. Would you say that it was

> reasonable to tell your descendants to have it as a law that they could never have a garden, they could never have a vineyard, they could never have a house? They had to live in tents, they had to be nomads, and they could never drink any wine. Does that sound reasonable to you? Not really.
>
> But here's what our Lord is showing: the faithfulness of the Rechabites to the unreasonable commands of Jonadab, and the unfaithfulness of the Israelites to God's reasonable commands. Look at it in verse 15. Jeremiah 35 verse 15, "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them. And you shall dwell in the land which I have given you unto your fathers. But you have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me, because the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, have performed the commandments of their father, which he commanded them. But this people hath not hearkened unto me. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of the host, the God of Israel, behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them, and they have not heard, and I have called on them, but they have not answered."
>
> What did God do? God said, Look at the Rechabites. Jonadab gave them these unreasonable commands, and they obeyed. Look at you. I've given you reasonable, logical, godly commands, and you disobeyed.

If wine is sinful, or if alcohol is sinful in and of itself—and it is not, though some say that it is—and if it is wrong to offer wine to anybody under any circumstances, as some say, you have a real problem in Jeremiah 35. Look in verse 1: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go into the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, the temple, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jazaniah, the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brethren, all the sons of the whole house of the Rechabites, and I

brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanun, the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door. And I sat before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine and cups, and I said to them, Drink ye."

God said that this wine was to be offered to the Rechabites—God himself. When you take the position that alcohol is inherently sinful in and of itself, then you have problems. What does the Bible say in James 1? "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." If alcohol was wrong and sinful, James 1:13 could not possibly be true, because God would be tempting these people.

Some have suggested that the absence of alcohol proves godliness. I have never in my life encouraged people to drink. I do not drink. I have never done that. I am just trying to be honest with Scripture and honest with the Word of God. Trip is here, and he can tell you that I have spoken about this to all my grandchildren. I tell them, "If you don't ever start, you don't have to stop."

When God saved me, I was a sinner. But when God saved me, I never had to stop drinking. I never had to stop smoking. I never had to stop cussing. Why? Because I did not do those things before God saved me. If you do not ever start, you do not ever have to stop. Understand that. But if you say, "The absence of wine—that is going to prove that you are godly," or, "The absence of alcohol," no, the absence of alcohol does not necessarily prove godliness.

If strict abstainers are supposedly the godliest people of all, then that generation of the children of Israel who wandered in the desert should have been the godliest of all. In Deuteronomy 29, God said, "I have led you 40 years in the wilderness. Your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. You've not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, that you might know that I am the Lord your God."

What did God end up doing with that generation? He killed them. If you look in Hebrews chapter 4, God said they could not enter into His rest. Why? Because they were children of no faith. Of that

original group that came out of Egypt, how many got in? Two: Joshua and Caleb.

Applications and Conclusion

Let me make some applications in closing. First, I want to remind you once again that there is a difference between the social and religious use of wine. None are compelled to drink socially. On the other hand, those priests had no choice in the use of wine in those offerings. God demanded it. I do not believe we have any choice in the use of wine in the Lord's Supper, in the sense that I believe that is the way it was established.

The second application is this: The weaker brother objection is quickly and easily overcome, not only by common sense and reason, but above all by Scripture. My liberty in Christ and my life in Christ is not and cannot be controlled by people who are ignorant, weak, and sometimes unwilling to learn. I cannot order my life based upon your desires, your understanding, or your misunderstanding. I must order my life based upon the Word of God. You must order your life based upon the Word of God. We are not to be controlled by the weak brethren, although we must consider them.

Historical Shift to Grape Juice

How did the church ever get to using grape juice? Grape juice did not really come into use in the church until around the time of Prohibition. There was a man, whose name I will give you later, who was born in England in 1825. He moved to this country and lived in New Jersey. In 1869, he decided to develop a non-alcoholic wine for churches to use in communion. He did this because he believed that alcohol was inherently sinful in and of itself. His father, a merchant, kept a jug of whiskey in the basement of their home. His father would go down and drink the whiskey, come up, and then get into a fight with his wife. The mother always referred to the alcohol as "the devil's juice," and consequently this young man grew up hating it.

He was also a Methodist and preached as a Methodist pastor for a couple of years. He was a dentist, which was where he made his money. Based upon Louis Pasteur's pasteurization process, he found that if he could kill the yeast particle, he could have unfermented

wine, as he called it. When he tried to introduce it to the churches, however, it was met with great resistance.

He was a leader in the temperance movement, which does not really mean temperance. Literally, it should be the abstinence movement, because that was what they were saying. They went around this country using hatchets and axes in the saloons, which led, of course, to Prohibition. This man had a son who was also a dentist, and after a while, he decided to rename it.

He then took it to the World's Fair in Chicago, where it became an instant hit. It entered many restaurants alongside sarsaparilla and other drinks. It was called Welch's grape juice. The dentist was Dr. Thomas Welch, and his son Charles began manufacturing the grape juice and changed its name. After Prohibition, churches essentially began switching to grape juice. The truth is that, until the early 1900s, all churches used wine. Many believed it was wrong to change to grape juice and fought the change. Plenty of churches today still use only wine. Grape juice came through Dr. Thomas Welch, who believed that wine was inherently evil in itself. Sin, he believed, did not reside in the heart of man, but in the alcohol. Thus, in our day, the average church uses grape juice instead of wine.

If our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper with wine and unleavened bread, by whose authority and by what right can we change it? If you can change the wine to grape juice, I can change the unleavened bread to doughnuts. In fact, why not use coffee and cookies? If our Lord instituted it one way, that is the way it should be kept and observed. You will find out next week that there is a reason for it.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask that You help us and teach us, Lord. May we be biblical in every area of our life and thinking, and may we always follow Your Word. We ask that You speak to our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

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CHAPTER 10

The Lord's Supper

Part Ten

Introduction and Review of the Series

This is message number 10, and it is the end of this series dealing with the Lord's Supper.

Let us begin reading with Numbers chapter 6, beginning there with verse 1:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazirite, to separate themselves unto the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine or strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head, until the days be fulfilled in the which he separated himself unto the Lord. He shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of

his head grow. All the days that he separated himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, or for his brother, or for his sister, when they die, because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation, he is holy unto the Lord."

Now, we have been looking at the Lord's Supper for the past nine weeks. We have looked at the names, the significance, the partakers, the reproof, and, for the last several weeks, we have been looking at the elements. Certainly, as I pointed out, there is no discussion when it comes to the bread, because very obviously it is unleavened bread.

When we discussed the liquid in the cup, I asserted that I believed it was normally wine, but that it should be wine, and that when our Lord used the expression "the fruit of the vine" in Luke 22, it was a metonymy in which the matter or substance of a thing was put for the thing itself. I showed you numerous metonymies in the Bible: the fruit of the body, the fruit of the loins, brass substituted for heavy chains, and fir trees substituted for lances and spears. I also pointed out the distinction between the social use and the religious use of wine. The social use certainly fell under the matter of liberty, but the ceremonial, religious, or ecclesiastical use of wine allowed no liberty, because, as in Leviticus 23 and Numbers chapter 15, God demanded wine with the sacrifices. Then we looked at wine, its condemnation and its commendation in the Bible.

When I presented both sides, I was trying to show you everything that the Word of God says about the subject. You cannot pit one Scripture against another or hold one Scripture above another. You must take the entirety of God's Word and bow to it. The biblical position is this: We must view wine, or any alcohol, as the gift and blessing of God as long as it is used in the way that God commanded and commended. At the same time, we must despise and detest any misuse and abuse of it, because God condemns that in the Scripture. Only God's people can truly enjoy or appreciate anything and everything God has given us, because the Bible does say that all things are ours.

Pagan Philosophy and the Weaker Brother

Last week I dealt mainly with some objections and questions. One of the main points I made was that we have become literally filled with paganistic Greek philosophy, which asserts a dichotomy between matter and spirit. It tries to say that matter is somehow inherently evil in and of itself. Matter is not evil in and of itself. Evil resides in the heart of man, not in anything material. It is the same paganistic Greek philosophy that tries to say there is a difference between the secular and the sacred. For the child of God, there is no division between the secular and the sacred. For the child of God, everything is sacred.

You remember what the Bible says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." So there is no division between the secular and the sacred for the child of God.

I dealt with the weaker brother in the context of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians chapter 8. The weaker brother was not someone who had a propensity to drink. He was someone who would not touch it at all because of a misconception: he thought that somehow the matter was evil in and of itself, or that somehow an idol had influence upon meat.

I pointed out the word stumble. Skandalon was the Greek word. You cause a brother to stumble only when you encourage him to do what you are doing when he does not have your knowledge. I tried to show you the biblical understanding of the word offend. To offend a weaker brother means that you encourage him to do what you are doing without his having your knowledge.

That is when he sins against his weak conscience, the Bible says. When we cause him to do that, we sin against God ourselves. The weaker brother was then dealt with. I closed by dealing with the Rechabites in the book of Jeremiah, showing how clearly the vow that Jonadab placed upon his descendants did not affect us at all.

The Nazirite Vow and Priestly Abstinence

Today I am going to deal still with this same concept and show you why I believe there is an absolute necessity of using wine in the

Lord's Supper. I just read from Numbers chapter 6, dealing with the Nazirite's vow. Have you ever wondered why the Nazirite was forbidden wine or anything from a grape as long as he had that vow upon him?

Have you ever considered why the priests were not allowed the use of wine as they ministered to God in the tabernacle and in the temple, although wine was involved in the sacrifices? Why were the priests forbidden the use of wine as they went about their daily tasks in the temple?

The Old Testament, basically speaking, is a picture book. It draws out truths and places them in living color before our eyes. Unhappily, most people are colorblind and cannot see the truth, no matter how plainly or beautifully it is pictured or painted. So you have to ask yourself this question: What in the world does the Nazirite vow have to do with using wine in the Lord's Supper? And what does the abstinence of the priests from using wine during their service in the tabernacle and the temple have to do with using wine in the Lord's Supper? I believe that, as we look at this, it will give us a very clear explanation.

In Numbers chapter 6, verse 2, God says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves, shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazirite." The word Nazirite is Nazir, N-A-Z-I-R, in the Hebrew, and it literally means separated or consecrated. Thus, the very word Nazirite means separated or consecrated. The passage continues, "...speaking to the children of Israel, and saying to them, when either man or woman shall separate themselves, to vow a vow of a Nazirite, to separate themselves, what? Unto the Lord."

Verse 8 says, "All the days of his separation he is holy, what? Unto the Lord." This vow, then, involved someone setting himself apart to fulfill a certain function for the Lord. In other words, he was holy unto the Lord.

There are four main passages in the Bible that teach about Nazirites: Judges 13, verses 5 through 7; Judges 16, verse 17; Numbers chapter 6; and Amos 2, verses 11 and 12. Who was a

Nazirite? A Nazirite was an Israelite who had taken a special vow for a limited period of time and had consequently become a special temporary priest. The vow could be taken at any time, but it was especially taken during war.

In Judges, chapter 5, you see the song of Deborah and Barak as God gave them victory over their enemies. Look at verse 2, because there is an alternate reading.

Judges 5, verse 1, says, “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on the day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.” Some Hebrew scholars translate the final phrase, “that long locks of hair hung loose in Israel that the people volunteered, bless the Lord.” The long locks of hair hanging loose in Israel referred to soldiers who had taken a Nazirite vow.

It is noteworthy that, according to Numbers 6:2, either a man or a woman could take a Nazirite vow. Nowhere in Scripture, however, is there an illustration of a woman taking one. The Bible says, “When either man or woman shall separate themselves.” I am not saying that there were no women Nazirites whatsoever. I do not know. I am only saying that the Bible gives us no illustration of one.

Remember that, according to Numbers 30, certain limitations were placed upon women and their vows. If a woman uttered a vow and her father heard it, he could disannul her vow. If her husband heard it, he could disannul it. In other words, she could not take the vow apart from her head, whether her father or her husband. Thus, limitations were placed upon the vows women were able to take.

Numbers 6 gives three main stipulations for the Nazirite vow. First, verses 3 and 4 say, “He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, nor dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.” Therefore, there was to be no wine, no alcoholic beverage whatsoever, and nothing from grapes—not grape juice, grapes, or even the grape husk. That was the first stipulation.

The second stipulation is found in verse 5: no razor was to touch his head. “All the days of the vow of his separation, there shall no razor come upon his head until the days be fulfilled in which he separated himself from the Lord. He shall be holy and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.” If you took a Nazirite vow, there was to be no wine, no shaving of the head, and no trimming of the hair whatsoever.

In verses 6–8, he was not to touch a dead body: “All the days that he separated himself from the Lord, he shall come at no dead body.” It did not matter whether it was his father, mother, brother, or sister; he could not touch any dead body. There was no time limit given for a Nazirite vow. Tradition says that usually it was about thirty days, sometimes sixty or ninety at the most, but no time limit was set. A man could take a vow for a year or two years if he chose.

However, if you look at Numbers chapter 6, and he violated one of these three stipulations, he had to offer an offering and then start all over. “And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration, then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing. On the seventh day shall he shave it, and on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day.” The days before were lost, “because his separation was defiled.”

If he touched a dead body, if a razor came to his head, or if he touched anything from a grape, or any type of wine or alcohol, that was over. In other words, he then had to make an offering and start all over again. As far as I can tell, in all the years that I've studied the Scripture, there have been only three lifelong Nazirites in the Bible: Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist.

Jesus Christ was not a Nazirite. He was a Nazarene, from the town of Nazareth. There is a difference between a Nazarene and a Nazirite.

Now, let's take this prohibition against the use of wine or alcohol. A Nazirite was considered to be a special temporary priest. He had

taken a vow to perform some special sacred service, and therefore he was precluded from drinking wine during that time, as were all priests. Leviticus 10:8-10 says, “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine, nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

Verse 10 tells us specifically why this prohibition was laid down. First, the priest's judgment would not be clouded, so that he could tell the difference between the holy and the unholy, the unclean and the clean. He was to be capable of teaching all the statutes that the Lord had given unto him.

The Inadequacy of the Old Covenant

Why then does God prohibit the priests from having wine during their service in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, even though wine was used in the sacrifices? It is not that the wine was unclean, for God certainly used it in His sacrifices. It is because men are unholy and unclean. Under the old covenant, they could not relax with alcohol in the presence of God.

Some have suggested that the deaths of Nadab and Abihu were related to this. Leviticus 10:1 says, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." This is when God killed Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. Moses then comes to Aaron and says not to mourn for them. This is what God has done. Then, in verses 8 and 9, God says that they are to drink no wine.

It could be that these men were drunken, or well-soused, but I do not know that. The Bible does not say. What it does say is that they offered strange fire before the Lord. There could have been something to do with alcohol in their deaths, but the Bible does not make that clear. It also tells us, in Leviticus 9:24, that when the altar

was set up, "and there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering, the fat." When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Who was it that started the fire on that altar? God Himself did. There were specific commands in Leviticus 6:9-13 that the fire was never to go out. Why? Because God started that fire. He initiated it, and the priests were therefore under direct command not to let it go out. Why did they let it go out? I do not know. Maybe they were drinking; maybe they simply left it unattended. But one thing is sure: when they tried to start the fire themselves, God killed them. God put them to death.

Why, then, were the priests forbidden the use of wine or alcohol as they ministered in the presence of God? One answer is that God wanted to make sure they put a difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean. But there is another answer, and the Bible shows it to us: God forbade the priests to use wine as they served Him in the tabernacle and in the temple to demonstrate that the Aaronic priesthood was inadequate and that the true Sabbath had not yet come.

Think about that for a moment. Why were they forbidden the use of wine? First, because the Aaronic priesthood was inadequate; second, because the real Sabbath had not yet come.

One of the most important tasks of the priesthood in the Old Testament was to exclude Israel from God and to guard His holy place from defilement. Do you remember what happened in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 19, when God came down and spoke? The people said to Moses, "Speak thou to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die." That principle was therefore carried over into the priesthood.

The priests were mediators, or go-betweens. They represented God to the people and the people to God. The people did not have to do what the priests were able to do. Only the high priest could enter the holiest of all, and he could enter only once a year, and not without the shedding of blood. He had to have blood as he went.

Thus, although the priest was a mediator and might have been a descendant of Aaron, he was still inadequate to do what needed to be

done. When the Nazirite took his vow, he had to abstain from wine, exactly as the priest had to abstain. Why? The Bible was telling us that the Nazirite had a holy task to perform, and he was not to relax, rest, or enjoy the Sabbath of wine until his vow was over.

Grapes were forbidden to the Nazirite in the same way that wine or alcohol was forbidden. In Leviticus 25, God told Moses on Mount Sinai, “When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord.” When the children of Israel entered the land, they were to allow it to keep a sabbath to the Lord.

“Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof. But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest in the land, a sabbath for the Lord. Thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.”

Verse 5 says, “That which groweth of its own accord of the harvest thou shalt not reap. Neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed, for it is a year of rest unto the land.” Then, speaking of the year of Jubilee, He says, “A Jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you. Ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.”

When the children of Israel got into the land, every six years they were able to reap its fruit. In the seventh year, however, the land rested, and God specifically said they were not to prune their grapevines. He speaks of the “vine undressed.” The year of Jubilee was the fiftieth year: seven times seven is forty-nine, and then the fiftieth year was a Jubilee. The forty-ninth year was a sabbatical year, and the fiftieth year was also a sabbatical year. Once again, He speaks of the vine undressed.

Some of you have marginal references in your Bibles. In verses 5 and 11, when it speaks of the vine undressed, you may find “a vine of thy separation” or “the vine of thy consecration” as an alternate reading. You know why? Let me tell you why.

Because the Hebrew word for undressed is Nazir, N-A-Z-I-R, the same exact word. In other words, the grapevines growing wildly everywhere during the sabbatical year were like the hair, or the locks of the hair, of the Nazirites that grew long and untrimmed. And just like the Nazirites' locks were separated unto God, so God says these

grapevines, these vines undressed, are separated, they are consecrated, they are mine. You cannot cut them. You cannot prune them. So now you have the word separated and consecrated in reference to grapevines as well as in reference to the Nazirite. Both were separated from trimming.

Grapes were a symbol of the fertility and the blessing of the land of Canaan. In the book of Numbers, chapter 13, the spies had come back, carrying evidence of that blessing on their shoulders. Numbers 13:23 says, “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with how many clusters of grapes? One cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff.” Can you imagine it taking two men to carry one cluster of grapes?

What does that tell you? That tells you the fertility and the goodness of the land. When the people saw those grapes—my goodness—they understood that when they got into Canaan, it was going to be a sign of blessing and rest.

Now we begin to tie these things together. We are talking about the Nazirite, the grapevine, and the Sabbath. There are different Sabbaths mentioned in the Bible, and in Hebrews chapter 4 you can read about a number of those Sabbaths. For instance, the Bible says in verse 7, “For we who have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. And he spake in a certain place on the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all of his works.” Now that is the creation rest. That is when God created the world and rested.

"And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest." He is talking about another rest: "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." He is speaking of those children of Israel in the wilderness. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is written, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

"For if Jesus"—someone tell me who this Jesus is in verse eight. Joshua. The word Joshua and the word Jesus are identical; they are

one and the same. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day?"

There is the creation rest. That is true. There is also the Canaan rest. When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan with all these grapes and blessings, it was indeed a time of rest. Think of where they had been: Egypt, in slavery. Now God had sovereignly brought them out of Egypt, brought them into the land, and given them the land.

In one sense, it was a Sabbath, a rest—a vast difference from what they were and what they had in Egypt. But was Canaan rest what God gave the children of Israel in the Old Testament? Was that the true rest? No. That is why those priests could not have wine. That is why the Nazirite could not have wine. That is why those vines had to grow undressed every sabbatical year and every year of Jubilee.

After having talked about the creation rest and the Canaan rest, the Bible says in Hebrews 4:9, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” If the creation rest is not our rest, and if the Canaan rest is not our rest, then what does this mean? When you read the word rest in Hebrews 4:9, let me give it to you as it is in the Greek: “There remaineth therefore a sabbatismos to the people of God.” What is sabbatismos? A Sabbath. There remaineth a Sabbath to the people of God.

Were those sabbatical years the real Sabbath? No. They were types, pictures, and emblems. Were those Old Testament priests the real priests? No. They were types, pictures, and emblems.

The point is this: God says, “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.” The very fact that, when Israel entered and occupied the land, she was not permitted to harvest those grapes or trim those vines in the sabbatical year demonstrated that those Sabbaths were not the real Sabbath. The real Sabbath was yet in the future. Those vines were undressed, separated, and consecrated to the Lord, just like the locks on the Nazirite’s head. His locks were not to be cut until his vow was performed, until his vow was finished.

As long as his hair was long, his task was incomplete. As long as those great vines went undressed every seventh year, they taught us that God’s true Sabbath had not yet appeared.

Christ's Perfect Priesthood and Finished Work

The Old Covenant, under the Aaronic priesthood, was inadequate, incapable, and unable to accomplish real cleansing from sin. Hebrews 7:11 says, “If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?” Perfection could never be had under the Aaronic priesthood. If it could have been had under that priesthood, there would never have been a need for another priest under the Melchizedek order. We are talking about Jesus Christ. So look in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 6.

The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

What does that tell us? Nothing that those Old Testament priests did could make the worshipper perfect, complete, or holy. It was all temporary. All of those Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated over and over. Hebrews 10:1 says, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”

Why did those people keep coming every year if the blood of bulls and goats could not take away their sins? They were remembering that they were sinners, that they had sinned, and that they could not obtain permanent forgiveness, covering, and atonement through goats, bulls, and things like that.

In other words, all of those lambs sacrificed in the Old Testament could never take away sin. They pointed forward to the true Lamb of God who could take away sin: the Lord Jesus Christ. Those sacrifices pointed to the future. They said, “He’s coming. He’s not here yet. We don’t have the real Sabbath just yet. We don’t have the real completed redemption just yet, but He is coming.”

The prohibition against alcohol in the vow of the Nazirite and in the service of the priest was a picture that the true Sabbath, the true cleansing, and the true forgiveness had not yet come. Consequently, under the old covenant, men could not relax in the presence of God. The priests had to stay on their toes.

Every sacrifice had to be done exactly as God demanded: every service, ritual, ceremony, every I dotted and every T crossed. If they did not, they would be killed. That is why the high priest had pomegranates and bells on the hem of his garment, and why they tied a rope around his ankle as he entered the most holy place. If God killed him in there, they were not going in after him; they would drag him out. As long as they could hear the bells, they knew he was alive.

There was no perfection in the old covenant, and men could not relax in the presence of God. The inclusion and use of wine in the Lord's Supper, the institution of bread and wine, declares that in the new covenant the church has come into the true Sabbath, the true cleansing, and the true forgiveness of sins. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Jesus Christ has fulfilled every type, picture, symbol, and emblem in the Old Testament, and now men may relax in Him.

Hebrews 7:19 says, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made a high priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek:) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to

the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

He "needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." Jesus Christ is not like those Aaronic priests. He has an unchangeable priesthood and is therefore able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 9:11-15; Hebrews 10:5-14 (KJV)

Hebrews 9:11-15: “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Does it sound to you like Jesus Christ is a faulty priest or a perfect priest?

Hebrews 10:5-10: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Once for all.

> Hebrews 10:12-14: “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”
>
> You see, what the Aaronic priesthood could not give was perfection. That is why they had to do those sacrifices over and over and over and over and over. That is why those priests, when they went in, had to make sure they abstained from alcohol whatsoever. They could not relax in the presence of God. The true Sabbath had not yet come. The true salvation had not yet come. The true cleansing had not yet come.

Wine as a Sign of Completed Rest

> That Nazirite was a temporary priest. When he took that vow, he was separating himself to God and saying, I'll not touch wine, I'll not trim my hair, and I'll not touch a dead body until I've completed this task unto God.

We are talking about the Nazirite, and I am trying to show you the significance between the Nazirite vow, the priestly abstinence, and wine in the Lord's Supper. As we saw in Numbers 6:3-4, the Nazirite, when he had his vow, could not have wine. But Numbers 6:20 says, “And the priest shall wave them, that is, the sacrifices that he brings at the completion of his vow, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazirite may drink wine.”

When could the Nazirite drink wine? When his vow was finished, when his task was completed, he could then rest and relax in the presence of God. But until then, he could not.

As long as the priests were in the tabernacle and in the temple doing service unto God, they could not have wine. After they were finished with their service in the tabernacle and the temple, what did God give them? In Numbers 18:8, the Lord said unto Aaron, “Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I

given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. This shall be thine of the most holy things."

God gave them the most holy things reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they should render unto Him. These were most holy for the priests and their sons. In the most holy place they were to eat them; every male could eat them, and they were holy unto them. The heave offering and all the wave offerings of the children of Israel were given to Aaron, his sons, and his daughters with them, by a statute for ever; everyone clean in his house could eat them. Then verse 12 says, "All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee." My question is this: Were the priests able to drink the best of the wine after their service was over?

There is a specific reason for using wine in the Lord's Supper: it is the fulfillment of an Old Testament type. Men who are in Christ now may safely relax and trust His atonement, His offering, and His sacrifice. We are hidden in the hollow of His hands. Jesus Christ has done for us what millions of Aarons could never have done. Jesus Christ has secured for us an immutable, unchangeable, and unalterable position before the one true and living God. We have now come unto Jesus Christ, who is our true salvation, our true Sabbath, and our true rest.

The Kingdom and the Lord's Supper

After discussing the Canaan rest, Hebrews 4:9 says, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Do you remember what our Lord said in Matthew 11, verses 28 and 29? Our Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you" rest. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find" rest unto your souls.

Our minds—that is, our heads, our locks of hair—have now become totally and completely separated and consecrated to the one true and living God through Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ is the end of all the symbols, types, and pictures.

Now, one last thing before I try to tie this together for you. In Matthew 26, our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. This is a metonymy I told you about earlier. Look what our Lord said to His disciples. In verse 28, He said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Then, in verse 29, He said, "But I say unto you, 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."

The fruit of the vine is a metonymy, where the substance or matter is put for the thing itself. Our Lord said to His disciples, "I'm not going to drink of the fruit of the vine anymore until I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." The question, therefore, has to be asked: What did He mean by the Father's kingdom, and when and where is the Father's kingdom?

Is His kingdom the New Testament age, which He died to inaugurate, or is it heaven or glory itself? The answer is both. Listen carefully: We are now in the Father's kingdom. However, the total and absolute fruition of it will not appear until Christ returns. Let me show you what I'm talking about. Look in your Bibles first of all to Luke 10:9. I just want to show you a couple of verses. Remember the difference between when Christ was alive and when Christ died; I will show you that difference.

Our Lord says when He sends His disciples out, "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." He said this in Luke 11:20. Since Jesus Christ was, and is, the King, He did, in one sense of the word, bring the kingdom with Him.

What did He tell these people? "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." There was a sense in which the kingdom of God was present when Jesus Christ was here, because Jesus Christ is the King. He told the people that if He cast out demons with the finger of God, no doubt the kingdom of God was there with them.

Now I want you to see the difference in just a moment. The question has to be asked, Are we in the kingdom? The answer is yes, we are in the kingdom. Someone may say, "But Brother Weaver, we

pray in the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy kingdom come.'" That is true. We want it to come fully, finally, totally, and completely. Yes, we do. But it is here now, and it is coming in a more definite way, I can assure you.

Look, if you would, in the book of Colossians, chapter 1, to see what the Apostle Paul says. Colossians 1, verse 12: "Giving thanks unto the Father." Why should we thank the Father? Here is why: "Which hath made us meet," or suitable, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." How did He make us suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light? He "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us" where? "Into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Now here is the question: Are we in the kingdom? Yes. Did not Christ bring the kingdom with Him? Yes. But let me show you how there is a difference between when Christ was alive on this earth and when Christ died and rose again. Look carefully in Hebrews chapter 9. Remember, the word testament here is the word covenant. We speak of the Old Testament, or Old Covenant, and the New Testament, or New Covenant. Now watch carefully. Hebrews 9:16 says, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."

"For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of a testator.

Let me explain it like this. Suppose I wrote a will and left everything I had to Ed Wolfe. You will not get much, brother, but suppose I left everything to Ed. It is in my will. What is a will? It is my last will and testament. Although I have left everything to Ed, how much does he get right now? Zilch. Nothing. Why? I am still alive. In order for me to put that will into effect, I have to die.

Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, of the New Testament. But if I left everything to Ed in my will, that really and truly does not mean he is going to get everything. The executor of that will, or some shyster lawyer, might could beat him out of it and claim this and claim that. He might end up with some of it, but I

cannot do a thing about it. I cannot come back and say, "No, no, no, that is not what I meant; I meant this." I am dead. I cannot do that.

Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant. He died to put it into effect. Then He arose from the dead, ascended on high, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. He is now the executor of the estate. He will put into full effect the testament that He bequeathed.

The Bible teaches in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4 through 6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ."

Where is Christ right now? He is seated at the Father's right hand. He is in the Father's kingdom and glory. Where are we right now, positionally? We are in Him. When He died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. When He was resurrected, we were resurrected. When He ascended, we ascended. When He sat down, we sat down. We are in the Father's kingdom. Eternity is just the consummation of that kingdom.

Our Lord said to His disciples, "I won't drink any more of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." First Corinthians 10:16 calls the supper the cup of blessing, and the Apostle Paul asks, "Is this not the communion of the blood of Christ?" When we take the Lord's Supper, we commune not just with each other, but with Jesus Christ Himself. The use of wine in the Lord's Supper fulfills the Old Testament types of the Nazirite vow and the Aaronic priesthood.

Conclusion: Resting in Christ's Finished Work

They could never relax in the presence of God. But now, in Jesus Christ, we use wine in the Lord's Supper to show that the work is finished. All who trust in Jesus Christ may safely relax in Him, believe in Him, and rest in Him. There are no ceremonies to perform, no rituals to exercise, and no details to work out. Everything is finished. Everything is in Jesus Christ, just as the Nazirite could have wine after finishing his task, and just as the

priest could have wine after finishing his task. What did Jesus Christ say in John 19 on the cross? "It is"—what? "Finished."

He is drinking wine anew with His disciples in His Father's kingdom. Wine in the Lord's Supper is therefore a testimony to the finished work of Jesus Christ. He has finished His work and is now seated at the right hand of God. We may safely trust in Him and relax in Him. I am thankful that my salvation does not depend on what I have done or have not done, or on what I am going to do or not do. My salvation depends solely, totally, and completely upon the perfect person and work of Jesus Christ. It is what He has done, and it is finished.

Father, speak to our hearts. Help us to see the absolute blessing of God, the truth of Your Word, the fulfillment of these Old Testament types, and how we may relax and trust safely in Jesus Christ. Help us to be a testimony to His finished work and honor Him in all that we say and do. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

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