

The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective: The Lord's Supper and iShare

I Corinthians 11:17-34

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We will be reading the words of institution from I Corinthians 11 as we come to the Lord's Supper in this study. I Corinthians 11:17-34 says

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. [27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. [33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— [34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

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

The Lord's Supper is something that has been entrusted to His gathered church until He returns. When He returns on that day we'll move to another feast which will be the marriage feast of the Lamb. This is the Supper looking at the great and glorious Supper, the Lord's Supper. This is a time we come and celebrate this together. Until He comes, we come together. I tried to emphasize in the reading of the text that five different times He says "When you come together." So what are we to learn from this?

We are to learn immediately that the Lord's Supper is not a matter of private administration. It is not a matter of personal accommodation. The Lord's Supper is a gift of the Lord, an ordinance, a sacrament and something that He has designed for the better of His people until He comes again. It is to be assembled when we get together. What if you can't get to the gathered assembly? Then as a church pastors on staff with our church along with some elders and deacons and perhaps a few others would come and have a gathered assembly at your home. We won't come to privately administer it but we'll come to gather the Lord's people together, even if it's a smaller gathering for it will still be a gathering of God's people at that moment. This is something the Lord has designed and entrusted to us as the gathered assembly of His people until He comes again.

Therefore it has a specific purpose. I want to give you three thoughts of how the Lord uses this in your life from this text as an instrument of blessing in your life. Before I do this remember the context. This is what we call the most definitive text, the words of institution, on the celebration of the Lord's Supper but notice that it is given in the context of admonition and correction. The reason we have this instruction as to how to do the Lord's Supper is because they were doing it wrong. They were self centered, not gathered conscious. They were self righteous and they were actually taking something that was meant to bring us to humility, trust in Christ and growth in grace, for self promotion and self exaltation. It is in the context of that, that he tells us what it is designed for. So I want to give you three thoughts that perhaps you can think about every time you take the Lord's Supper and not just this time.

The first thought is the Lord's Supper has been designed to promote the spiritual growth of each believer when they come together in a manner worthy. Here is a quick word of explanation. It doesn't say that we are worthy of the Lord's Supper. If we were worthy it would be our supper not the Lord's Supper. The Lord alone is worthy but that doesn't mean we don't come thoughtfully or prepared. We come in a manner worthy. In other words, in the way we approach the Table communicates our love for Christ, our desire to grow and our love for one another. We come in a manner worthy. Do I have ought against someone or does someone have ought against me? I need to ask them to forgive me. I need to discern the body of Christ rightly. This Supper is not only to celebrate my

growing relationship with Jesus but my right relationship with His people. I am to come in a manner worthy with my focus upon the Lord and my relationships intact and appropriate with God's people.

It said three different times in the text "I want you to come together for the better not for the worse." Clearly this Table is for sinners saved by grace because if it's for perfect people why would I need to come for the better, if I'm already perfect? But it is for sinners who have been saved by grace who want to grow in grace and their relationship to each other and with the Lord. So that is what it is designed for. The Lord has designed it to bless you personally as you come together corporately in a manner worthy.

Here is a second blessing of the Lord's Supper. It is so easy in my Christian life to get off center. Perhaps you have the same problem I do. So the Lord's Supper is designed to recalibrate every believer for two things – to focus on Christ and to focus on your foundation, the cross. I may have used this illustration before but my brother in law and I walked through this wonderfully, beautiful Episcopal church while we were up in Washington for my nephew's graduation. When we saw these trusses I knew exactly what he was going to ask me because he makes trusses. He said "I wonder how long it took to make those trusses?" I said, "I don't have the slightest idea but I know you do and I know I'm about to hear how long it took to make those trusses."

In Charlotte we had a large room for ministry that had trusses that he had designed for us. I remember one day chiding him about the length of time it had taken. He gave me this marvelous sermon illustration that I have remembered. He said "Harry you don't know how much time I have to take at the beginning so I don't have to start over when I get to the end. If I get off at the beginning just a fraction by the time I get to the end I am completely off track. I have to stay on target."

I know you're sensitive to your sins and I know you want to be obedient to Jesus. I know you want to share the Gospel. I know there are things that have come into your life that are blessings and things that are challenges. It's so easy for us to get so self absorbed, not in self righteousness but even in self examination that we forget where our hope is. We praise the Lord for the evidence of His grace in our life when we're growing but our hope is not in our growth. Our hope is in the Lord. So the Supper is designed to bring you back to the Lord and His death.

Why is there a manger? It was because He was born to die. Why is the resurrection glorious? It is because it announces the triumph of His death. Why is the second coming assured? It is because of the victory at the cross and so the Lord's Supper while it assumes the Virgin birth, it declares the resurrection and it anticipates the second coming because we do this until He returns. Yet the focus is at the cross. He is recalibrating us for it is the cross where your sins are paid for and His righteousness is given. At the cross your sins went to Him. He paid

for them and from the cross His righteousness went to you. Because your sins went to Him, He paid for them and you're forgiven. Because His righteousness goes to you, you are now accepted in the Beloved One. You are clothed with His righteousness. So this is designed to recalibrate us, to put us back on target.

Between now and the next Lord's Supper there will be that tendency to begin to move away from where the Hope is and put our hopes in other places. That's why as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup. That's why we do it multiple times which is to keep recalibrating ourselves along with the preaching of the Word, Lord's Day after Lord's Day.

Here is the third and final thought as to why the Lord has entrusted this to us until He returns. The Lord's Supper is designed to put one more tool in the toolbox of sharing the Gospel with others. It says when you come in a manner worthy to the Table you proclaim the Lord's death, you preach the Gospel until He comes again. When God's people gather, having been instructed by His Word, in a manner worthy, fixed upon Jesus, reminded of the cross, the very coming together becomes a statement of the Gospel to the world. We're telling everyone here is our Hope and it is a reminder that what I do I now go tell others that Christ saves sinners.

Isn't it glorious that we have a meal that reminds us that our Savior loves us? He gave Himself for us and then He reminds us that He didn't give this for our own personal investment but He gave this to us as an investment to give away to others. Proclaim the Lord's death that Jesus dies for sinners. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Praise the Lord! We are coming to His Table now meet Him personally together in the Lord. Confess your sins. You're not telling Him anything He doesn't already know. If you don't tell Him He doesn't get amnesia. Confess them and then be reminded of this.

At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. Refocus on the Lord your Savior and remember your solid foundation. He had died the death you ought to have died and He has given you with the life you were supposed to live, He lived for you. He has given you His righteousness. Lord, in these moments would You fill my heart to overflowing that as I scatter and we as Your people are not gathered now scatter this week. May that message be taken to the world. The world needs a Savior. The world needs Christ who alone is the Savior of sinners.

I know many of you are vexed and concerned and rightly so. I will not become partisan about matters of who is going to be a leader, a president, a governor or a senator and certainly we need to engage and ask God for guidance on this but what your friends need is Jesus. You have been given the privilege to tell them. Come to the Table and then go to the highways and byways. Invite and compel men and women to come to Christ who came for them. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments before we come to the Table. Thank You for the privilege to participate together. Thank You Father for the way You work in the lives of Your people so gloriously, so wonderfully. So Jesus Redeemer You have not only saved us but You designed this moment so that we might grow in the grace of Christ our Lord. Jesus, You are our Redeemer. Father, we have a Redeemer because You gave Your Son. Holy Spirit we have come to the Redeemer because You came and brought us to Him, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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