**“DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”**

The Lord’s Supper. It’s sometimes called communion. Some denominations refer to it as the “eucharist,” a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” The Lord’s Supper is 1 of the 2 ordinances that we Baptists observe (the other being baptism). Both were commanded by Jesus and with both He gave us examples to follow. We need to be obedient to our Lord’s command to practice these. So they’re not optional. This morning we’re going to focus our attention on the Lord’s Supper. Now, let me ask you a question up front. How often should we observe the Lord’s Supper?

The fact of the matter is that the Bible doesn’t give any specific instructions as to how often we should observe the Lord’s Supper. It just says that we should do it. How often is up to us. Most Bible scholars believe that the early church observed the Lord’s Supper every time they gathered. Acts 2:42 says that, “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” A few verses later we read, “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.” So the Lord’s Supper, the “breaking of bread,” was a regular part of their corporate worship. Here at our church we generally observe the Lord’s Supper about once every 3 months. It should be done often enough to renew our focus on Christ (the purpose for the Lord’s Supper), yet not so often that it becomes routine, commonplace, merely a religious ritual. So it’s not the frequency that matters so much as the heart attitude of the participants. This was the problem in the Corinthian church.

Most of Paul’s letter to the church at Corinthians (1 Cor) deals with specific issues and questions they had for Paul. Regarding the Lord’s Supper, let me describe the situation as it existed in Paul’s day. It was the custom in the early church to come together to celebrate the Lord’s Day (Sunday). Together the believers enjoyed a Christian social meal called the “agape” or “love” feast. This meal was a cultural thing – *explain*. The love feast was followed by worship (singing hymns) and the observance of the Lord’s Supper, then a sermon. The love feast was supposed to be a time of fellowship and preparation for the Lord’s Supper. But that was not what was taking place in the church at Corinth.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

Paul rebukes the Corinthian believers. V 17 “I do not commend you.” In other words, “I can’t praise you.” In v 22 Paul repeats this: “What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.” He says, “Your coming together is not for the better but for the worse.” “It’s not a good thing for your spiritual life. You’d be better off if you stayed home!” Wow!

So what was going on? Why such strong words from Paul? Well, for one thing they were coming together with the wrong attitude. V 18 “when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.” There were differences of opinion which were fracturing the church. The believers in Corinth were NOT united. They were NOT in one accord. There was fighting, bickering, arguing. There were various groups, cliques, which Paul addressed back in Chs 1 & 3. In 1 Cor 1:10 Paul says, “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” Clearly this was a problem in the Corinthian church. And at the heart of this problem was their carnality. They were operating not in the Spirit but in the flesh. In 1 Cor 3:3 Paul says, “for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” So a big part of the problem with the Corinthian church was their selfish, carnal mindset.

Well, then Paul says a very interesting thing. READ 1 Cor 11:19.

Is Paul saying here in this verse that divisions, contentions, factions are necessary – that seems to be what he’s implying – and, if so, why?

When struggles and adversities come into the life of a body of believers, the church at Corinth in this case – and give enough time they eventually will (after all the church is made up of imperfect people) – you begin to see who the truly spiritual, godly people are – “those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” These people will come to the forefront in the midst of adversity. This is a part of God’s approving process mentioned in James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” When problems come the wheat is separated from the chaff, the cream rises to the top. The way a person handles adversity says a lot about their character. This goes for in the church or outside the church. The problems facing the church at Corinth were necessary in order to purify and cleanse that body of believers and to identify who the real spiritual leaders were. So then, divisions are not good, but something good can come from them.

Back to the specific problem with the Lord’s Supper… READ 1 Cor 11:20.

You may think it is the Lord’s Supper but if your hearts aren’t right it’s just another meal. What you are doing is NOT the Lord’s Supper.

READ 1 Cor 11:21

In this verse Paul identifies the selfishness, debauchery, drunkenness and gluttony that was taking place at their love feasts and communion. What a sad commentary on the state of that church! Where was the unity? Where was the love? Where was the fellowship? It just wasn’t evident.

V 22, “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?” Paul implies, “If you gathered just to eat and drink you should have just stayed home!” Paul tells them in no uncertain terms, “You are despising the church of God! You are creating barriers between rich and poor – “by humiliating those who have nothing.” These attitudes have no place in the church. The church should be the one place where socioeconomic, racial or any other barriers are broken down – where we can all lay aside our petty differences and, in a spirit of unity, worship our living Lord and Savior.

Right in the middle of Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians he shifts gears. He beautifully lays out the proper pattern for conducting the Lord’s Supper. By doing so Paul emphasizes the whole purpose for the Lord’s Supper.

Now, before I read v 23-26, that familiar passage we hear every time we observe the Lord’s Supper, I want to read what Jesus taught about Himself in John Chapter 6.

Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” *[they interpreted what Jesus said literally]* So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man *[refers to Himself]* and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (v 51-56)

So, when Jesus teaches us to “eat His flesh” He’s speaking not literally symbolically. His flesh represents Jesus’ incarnation. The divine Son of God comes down from heaven and He enters our physical world taking on human flesh. Immanuel, “God with us.” So when we eat His flesh in a spiritual sense we are accepting by faith that Jesus was in fact the incarnate Son of God. Then when Jesus teaches us to “drink His blood” He’s again speaking symbolically. This time He refers to His death on the cross – His blood shed for you and for me, His death the full payment for our sins. So when we drink His blood in a spiritual sense we are accepting by faith that Jesus’ death on the cross paid our sin debt. “Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.” We rely completely on what He did for us and not on anything we can do. Our response is simply to believe what He says. Jesus taught in John Ch 6 that when we do this we will “[have] eternal life, and [He] will raise [us] up on the last day.” When we accept by faith these two things then “[we] will abide in [Him], and [He] in [us].” That’s what saves us. That’s what makes us Christians. So bear this in mind as we read this very familiar passage in 1 Cor about the Lord’s Supper.

READ 1 Cor 11:23-26

The scene is the upper room shortly before Jesus will go to the cross. Jesus and His disciples have gathered to eat the Passover meal. It’s no coincidence that many of the elements of the Lord’s Supper came from the Passover meal – unleavened bread (thin cracker) being broken, the drinking of a cup of wine, the calling to remembrance. The Passover was instituted by God to remember His deliverance of His people from Egyptian bondage, freeing them to then go to the Promised Land – Yahweh, the God who saved His people after 400 years of slavery. How did He do this? By the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish and by the placing of its blood on the doorposts of their homes. What Jesus does now is to transform the Passover into the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus to remember God’s deliverance of the world from the bondage of sin, from the clutches of death and Hell. Saved from all that to eternal life. Yahweh is still the only God who saves. How did He do this? Again, by a blood sacrifice, but this time it was the sacrifice of His only begotten Son on the cross. Thru the shed blood of the perfect Lamb of God. We’re saved when we appropriate that blood, place it in a figurative sense on the doorposts of our hearts, in other words, we believe it by faith.

V 23, this is something Paul received from the Lord. It’s not merely his own opinion. It’s a divine truth taken from the statements of Jesus. All 4 gospels mention this event in the upper room (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; John 13-17 gives us extensive teachings of Jesus to His disciples though not these specific words). However, important point, when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians none of the gospels had yet been written, so this is a teaching that Paul received not from Matthew, Mark, Luke, John or Peter, but directly from Jesus Himself. In Gal 1:12 Paul says, “For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“The Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, 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.’” Here’s an example of where the KJV actually did not translate this verse correctly. KJV reads, “this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.” However, the oldest Greek manuscripts don’t contain the word “broken” so the ESV has it right – “This is My body which is FOR YOU.” Remember, not a bone of Jesus’ body was broken on the cross. John 19 tells us “So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs… For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’” This quotes from Numbers 9:12 (v 32,33,36).

“Do this in remembrance of Me.” What do we remember about Jesus with the breaking of the bread and eating of it? John 6, we remember Jesus as the incarnate Son of God who came from heaven to earth and became flesh and dwelt among us. Why did He do this? FOR US. For you. For me. Because He loved us. He became one of us, yet without sin. That made Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins as human beings. That human body which Jesus inhabited suffered and died on the cross FOR US. And as our Advocate with the Father, our great High Priest He sympathizes with us, He knows what we feel. He’s been in our shoes.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:25

Notice this is a new covenant, a new promise and it’s ratified by His blood spilled out on the cross FOR US. His sacrifice was done once for all time. The old covenant which had also been ratified by blood, the blood of an animal, which had to be done over and over again, has been replaced. That’s why as Christians we no longer celebrate Passover. We celebrate the Lord’s Supper. And when we do we, in essence, renew our vows to Jesus, recommitting our lives to Him.

“Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” What do we remember about Jesus when we drink the cup of wine or grape juice? John 6, we remember His death on the cross, payment for our sins in full. Why did He do this? FOR US. Because He loves us. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

When we observe the Lord’s Supper, v 26, we “proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” It becomes our testimony to the world about what Jesus did for us.

Paul shifts gears again going back to where the Corinthian believers are spiritually. He tells them how they are to approach the Lord’s Supper.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:27

How can we Christians observe the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner? Wrong attitudes, unconfessed sin, ignoring it, indifference toward it, treating it as something common or trivial, making it into something its not. It’s a remembrance, a memorial. It doesn’t save. And it is not merely a religious ceremony. It is intended to remind us, to focus our attention on what Jesus did for us. When we don’t do that we are “guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.” We dishonor what Jesus did for us. So Paul offers a warning, that we examine ourselves…

READ 1 Corinthians 11:28

Before I partake, as I prepare for the Lord’s Supper, I examine myself, my own life, my motives, my attitudes, I recognize, confess and repent of my sins. It should be a time of spiritual recommitment and renewal. My mind shouldn’t be distracted by other things but rather focused on Jesus and what He did for me and what He wants me to be for Him. What happens if I don’t. Well, Paul gives us this warning…

READ 1 Corinthians 11:29-32

The chastening hand of God comes. “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” (Heb 12:6) The worst thing that can happen to a believer is not that they’ll lose their salvation. No, if you’re truly a believer in Jesus Christ then your salvation is secure. The worst thing that could happen to a believer is that God might choose to take them home to heaven early. Personally I’m looking forward to being with the Lord one day, but I don’t want to rush things! I would like to hang around here a little while longer, as long as He will allow me.

READ 1 Corinthians 11:33-34

So, Paul says, we should use the Lord’s Supper as an opportunity to correct our behavior, our attitudes, to do serious business with the Lord. Paul closes by telling the Corinthian believers, “I’ll address the other issues when I come to you.” Apparently there were more issues to be discussed.

As I prepared this lesson I was struck once again by just how much God loves me and what He did for me in sending Jesus to live here among us for 30 years, teaching us, revealing God so clearly to us, and then to die on the cross for my sins and then to be gloriously resurrected. He’s done everything for me. I thought, “He really is my all in all.” So let’s close by singing that familiar chorus, “You Are My All In All” as our personal song of thanksgiving to Jesus, remembering what He’s done for us.