

The Lord's Supper

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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Well, grab your Bibles and let's go to 1 Corinthians 11. We're in between book expositions right now. We finished the book of Philemon. I'm praying about where to go next and when to go next. I do have some things I'd like to preach on between now and picking up with a book, but looking at the pastoral epistles, I have started studying some in 1 Timothy and we'll see if that's where we land. Can I tell you something? I don't like doing a lot of joke stuff but I thought this was kind of cute. I'm going to say this and we're going to go on. Brother Jono Sims is a good friend of mine and you guys know Brother Jono. Jono is the king of pun, p-u-n, pun, and he called me the other day and very seriously said, he said, "Pastor, you know Philemon had a lot of followers, you know after the book of Philemon was written, a great group of followers and they called them his minions. They called them Philemons." I told him I was going to tell y'all that so I did that now, alright? Alright.

1 Corinthians 11. We're going to talk about the Lord's table this morning and I'll be more brief than usual as we have members to present and then the Lord's table to partake of. But here the Apostle Paul is exhorting the believers at Corinth, at least most of them were, I think, and he's exhorting them about some errors and mistakes, out-and-out sin that they were participating in connected to the Lord's table. He's already rebuked them for coming to the meal that would be connected with the Lord's Supper and coming just to eat the meal and gorge on the meal and miss the point of the Lord's table. He's already condemned them and corrected them for coming to the Lord's table and drinking too much wine and getting drunk and he would say, "Do you not have houses you can go and do that at?" So he's exhorted this immature church to get their hearts right about the Lord's table and in that context we pick up with verse 23 of 1 Corinthians 11 and we'll go down through verse 26. He says,

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

I just simply have entitled this "The Lord's Supper." Now some introductory thoughts and they'll come basically under two headings. First of all, the divine origin of the supper; and secondly, the historical context of the supper.

Paul begins in verse 23 writing to the church at Corinth and says, "For I received from the Lord what I delivered to you." Paul's point is that he, Paul, did not come up with this idea. The things he is telling them about the proper observance of the Lord's Supper in a local church he says came from the Lord. It came from God. "God gave this to me as a direct and divine revelation and I've taken what God told me and I've given it now to you. I'm instructing you." Scholars tell us actually this writing of 1 Corinthians was probably penned before the Gospel writers wrote about the historical narrative of when Jesus turned the Jewish Passover into the Lord's Supper, so this was probably the first written divine revelation concerning the Lord's Supper. So we have something the apostle tells us came from God. Men in the early church did not think this up in order to help us be a better church or understand the Lord's death or to remember him. God himself has ordained this ordinance for his church.

Now a lot more now about the historical context. As we look in verse 23, the Bible simply says, "that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread." Now he did not say on the eve of the Jewish Passover. That is when the Lord established the Lord's Supper, it was on the eve of the Jewish Passover, it was at the end of the Jewish Passover meal, but Paul doesn't say it was at the end of the Jewish Passover, he simply says on the night in which Jesus was betrayed. I think one of the points here is to heighten the contrast. He's setting the beauty of the supper against the backdrop of the awful betrayal of Judas Iscariot and this black backdrop makes what he did for us far more beautiful. Here our Lord is celebrating this Jewish Passover then transforming the Jewish Passover into the church's Lord's Supper and while he is sitting there, his betrayer is sitting across the table from him. The one who would betray him to death is taking the supper with him and yet the whole time in that context, his focus, his aim is what he's going to do to please his Father and care for his church, save his church.

We are reminded today that baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two significant ordinances that God has given his church. Listen to me: there are no others. Only baptism and only the Lord's Supper. We do not use the word "sacrament." The idea of a sacrament involves saving merit being involved in the participation of the ritual. We reject that absolutely and categorically. There is no saving merit in coming to a certain church at a certain place and participating in a certain ritual. The only thing that saves is you placing your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The ordinance is a symbol, it's a memorial. It's wonderful, it's special, and I might say it's even mystical because God I think in a special way dwells spiritually in the midst of his people when we partake of these special ordinances.

I don't know how the Roman Catholic Church came up with the seven sacraments they practice. Well, I do know how they came up with it, they made it up, but it didn't come from the Bible and it didn't come from the Lord. But you do understand, if you want

power and control over people, you create a lot of stuff they have to do when they come and sit under your authority as a priest and then if you can get them to believe that, you can control them better. I don't want to control you, I want Christ to control you. I want you to know him, to love him, to adore him, to fellowship with him, and therefore follow your pastors because of that love for him, not out of some controlling coercion and manipulation to some slavery to rituals in order to get yourself into heaven or hopefully get yourself through purgatory more quickly.

So there are two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both instituted by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. So historically speaking, the night Jesus was betrayed, it was the Passover. They had had the Passover meal. His disciples are literally lounging around a table. We kind of dress it up a little bit. To be honest, I'm not real fond of those fancy silver containers down there. They're okay. They're not necessarily sinful but they're not necessary either. Just because we give it some sort of beauty doesn't mean it's any more the Lord's Supper. As a matter of fact, the early Lord's Supper was very casual, it was very informal. They are lounging around a table and they're fellowshiping as brothers in Christ.

Now there needs to be a dignity and a respect. I just attended my youngest daughter's graduation and I swear that atmosphere was like a barroom. I don't know what's happening to our institutions. Everything's a big pep rally these days. I mean, somebody showed me the video of one of the big churches in our area that looked like some sort of rock concert and they were playing secular music in the church. Folks, church doesn't need to be a little cleaner version of the world's entertainment. We have something far greater than the world to place our hope and our heart in.

So what I'm saying here is dressing this up does not make this more the Lord's Supper. It works good. It's not wrong but maybe we'll do something different in the future. I don't know. I have to think about that a little bit more. But the original historical setting was, again, a room together, informal, lounging around a table, brothers fellowshiping together after the Passover meal.

Now today when an Orthodox Jew celebrates his Jewish Passover, what he is doing is he is recalling, he is memorializing the great deliverance God gave Israel from Egyptian captivity. You remember the story, Israel is enslaved by Egypt. God had decided to redeem them, deliver them from that bondage, and God told every household in Israel to take the blood of a spotless lamb and after sacrificing that lamb, gather that blood and smear that blood with a hyssop branch on the doorpost and on the lintel, and every household that had the blood applied, that night the death angel passed over that house, but every house among the Egyptians that did not have the blood applied, the death angel visited and took the life of the firstborn. So through the horror of that experience, the Egyptians were provoked by God's dealings to let the Israelites go free.

So that's what the Jewish Passover is, they are remembering this great redemptive story, this great deliverance God gave them from Egyptian captivity, but when we take the Lord's Supper, we're not doing what they're doing. The Jews today, the Orthodox Jews,

tragically miss what the Old Testament Passover foreshadowed. They tragically miss what the Old Testament Passover meal pointed to and that is Jesus Christ. Those little spotless lambs they would slay and the blood they would gather was all but a foreshadowing, it was a type, it was a picture of Jesus Christ. We do not celebrate the deliverance from Egyptian captivity, we celebrate and memorialize the deliverance we have from sin and the kingdom of darkness through the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13 reminds us, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." Everything, everything, everything is summed up in Jesus. Everything. So much so that the writer to the Hebrew church, the book of Hebrews tells us that all of the ordinances and all the rituals and all the formal religion of ancient Israel is now become, this is the New American Standard word, has now become obsolete. Jesus has fulfilled it all. Everything centers in Jesus Christ.

So on this night of the Jewish Passover, Jesus is gathered in this room with his disciples, they've had the traditional Jewish Passover meal, and then he institutes at the end of that meal the Lord's Supper, in effect saying, "Everything pointed to this moment, to this time, it pointed to me." So as the Jews that next day were sacrificing their lambs, giving them to the temple priest, Jesus Christ was hanging on a cross outside the gate of the city, the only true Lamb of God, taking the sin of the world upon himself. Jesus took the ancient feast of the Jewish Passover and he's now transformed it to new meaning. Calvary has now superseded deliverance from Egypt as the greatest redemptive event in history. It is the event our hearts go to and our hopes are hinged upon. We do not look to the blood smeared by hyssop branch on the doorpost, we look to the blood that stained a cross, the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Now a little bit more, historically speaking. We know from the early chapters of Acts that they participated together. Acts 2 shows us that they got together as they were baptized and added to one another. They listened to the apostles preaching and the fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayer. So you have very simply Gospel preaching, converts were baptized and then they participated together in fellowship, including having the Lord's Supper together.

Later on, it was added that they would always have a meal because many in the church literally did not have enough to eat and it was cruel to bring them together to take the Lord's table when they were literally hungry. So they'd have a big fellowship meal, make sure everybody was full and then have the Lord's Supper at the end, and this worked good as the Gospel went from the Jews to the Gentile regions because the Gentiles, practically all of them had their love feast, they had an association with their old pagan worship, so they just took that love feast out of paganism and into the church and the early church among the Gentiles would have a big feast meal and at the end of the meal they would have their Lord's Supper, and that's what we see in the New Testament among the Jews and the Gentile believers.

So that's something of the divine origin and the historical context of the Lord's Supper. Now let me give you two simple points before we proceed and partake together this morning. First of all, the Lord's Supper is so that we might remember him. I. To remember him. Very simply he says it, he first says it in verse 24, "when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" Now look at verse 25, "In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'"

First of all he took the bread, the Bible says, and he broke it. The idea of breaking and I think it has two points: first of all, so it could be distributed to all; but also it symbolized his broken body. His body would be broken under the weight of divine wrath as he hung on the cross in the place of his children, as he represented us before the holy bar of divine justice. Then it was distributed out among the others that were there and he said, "And this is my body." As bread is health to the physical body, so Jesus Christ is health to the soul.

Then he says something real simple, four words, but we ought to stop on it and let it sink it a little bit, "which is for you. This is My body which is for you." Does that not humble you? The divine Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, he's never sinned, he has all authority in heaven and on earth, he's in this little room, a dark place, maybe a lantern or two in there, he's lounging around with these disciples who stayed faithful with him, at least to this point. Judas Iscariot is in the room, the man who will betray him and turn him over to the authorities. He said, "Fellas, I want you to know from now on you're not going to look back to the deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egyptian captivity, from now on when you take this memorial, think of me. Think of me, my body which is for you."

Child of God, can I say something to you? If you've believed on Jesus Christ, if he is your hope and your trust is in him – listen to me – him and him alone as your Savior, the next time Satan whispers in your ear, "Do you really think you're okay? Do you really think you're justified in the eyes of God?" you need to remind yourself, "He gave his body for me. Holy, pure, righteous Son of God gave himself for me." Now listen to me: and he knew everything you are and everything you were going to be when he did it. He had no eye to your improvement. He had no eye to your coming sanctification or your new ethical outlook or you turning over a new leaf or your new moral lifestyle you ought to adopt. He took you like you were: wretched, filthy, dirty, vile, justly condemned, and he said, "My body, I'm going to give it for you." I want to tell you something, I could run around this room and shout all afternoon, "That is sufficient for my sin and your sin and the sins of a thousand worlds." When the condemnation comes and the guilt comes and you're beaten down, you look up and you say, "His body was for me. I'm free. I'm free. I'm free." Command your emotions to get in line with God's truth. It's for you.

He takes the cup. They finish the Jewish Passover and he reaches down and he takes the cup and he says in verse 25, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." Covenant is a promise, it's more than a promise but a promise is a good way to understand it. It's an

obligation. A promise and an obligation he puts on himself. By the way, this wasn't a dialogue, this was a monologue. "I am doing it for you. I am going to shed my blood and in my blood shed on that cross, I'm sealing your eternity and I'm promising you because of my body and my shed blood, you are safe now and forever. This is a new promise, a new covenant. It's for you." Ratified in the regal, royal, righteous blood of Jesus Christ. I want to tell you something, Jesus didn't have a man's blood in his veins. He had no father, not humanly. This was God's blood. God's blood. In the old covenant, the Jews, the faithful Jews would bring their sacrifices, their turtledoves, their pigeons, their bullocks, their goats, and then on the Day of Atonement, a spotless lamb. None of those could take away sin. They all pointed to Jesus. This new promise of God, this new covenant he makes with those who will believe on him is ratified in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. This is the same way a signature ratifies a contract today. God promised Israel back when they were in Egyptian bondage, "If you'll put the blood on the doorpost and on the lintel, I promise you, you'll be delivered from the death angel." And then Jesus Christ has now taken his own blood and signed on the dotted line for us in his own blood, representing us before God that he stood in our place. He has settled and sealed our fate before God.

You listen to me, you rotten, wretched sinner, listen to me: his death, his blood makes you righteous in the eyes of God. I'm telling you what, that's good stuff. The old covenant required continuous sacrifices. They would bring a dove, they'd bring a turtledove, a bullock, a goat, they'd bring a lamb and the next thing you know, they've got to bring another one. The next thing you know, they've got to bring another one. Next thing you know, somebody in the family gets sick, got to bring another one. Somebody sinned, got to bring another one. But the book of Hebrews said he died once for all. All settled, all sealed, all done in the blood of Jesus Christ. And just as the juice of the vine when it's pressed out in the winepress, so his body was pressed under the winepress of the fierce wrath of God and his blood came forth covering our sin. The old covenant brought the reminder of sin continually before us. The new covenant brings the reminder of sin's remission continually before us. Are you hearing me? We don't take this meal to say we hope we'll do better. We take this meal saying thank you that it's all done in Jesus Christ. And guess what that does? That makes me want to do better. Are you hearing me? Not to gain something but because he's gained it all for me.

Well, some people say that you have to take the supper this way and that way or this many times, well, what does the Bible say about that? Well, he says in verse 25, "as often as you drink it." Literally it just means as many times as you do it, do it this way. There is no set amount of time. Now we know in the early chapters of Acts when the whole church was all gathered together there because of persecution and because of poverty they were all living this communal sort of lifestyle for a little while, it wasn't long, it wasn't a permanent setup, but in that setting they were taking the Lord's table daily. Later on, Acts 20 shows us things had settled down, people had settled in their own regions again, and the church would take it weekly. But if you want the earliest biblical example, you need to take the Lord's table daily, you need to take it after a meal, you need to take it in your home. My point is these people who make the way you take the Lord's Supper into a law are missing the whole point. The Lord's Supper is to commemorate that we're

not under law. Don't make it a law. Are you hearing me? It's to commemorate that we're free from the law as far as justification in righteousness goes so don't turn the supper itself into some kind of law.

Well, Jesus said, "Remember. Take the supper and remember me and all that I've accomplished for you." 2. Not only to remember him but to proclaim him. To proclaim him. In verse 26 he very simply says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." I just thought about five different ways we proclaim or you might say, objects to whom we proclaim.

1. We proclaim this to ourselves. The supper is to remind you that it's not by might, it's not by power, but by his Spirit that you're saved. You proclaim to yourself. You take that wafer in a moment, you drink that juice in a moment and you declare again, "Self, I reject, I repent of looking to any and all other approaches, philosophies or viewpoints. I proclaim again to me, my faith is in Christ alone."

I'm sorry for this allergy thing in my throat. It's been a problem lately so I'm struggling a little bit with getting my sound out because I'd like to get a lot of sound out right now and I can't get it out.

You've got to learn to talk to yourself more but talk truth to yourself when you do, amen? Some of you are all out of whack, some of you are depressed and discouraged because you keep talking nonsense to yourself. Talk truth to yourself. So we proclaim to ourselves Jesus is my all-in-all.

2. We proclaim it to God. It's another way in the innumerable number of ways we say to God every day but it's a key way we say to God, "Lord, I accept your Son Jesus Christ, his body and his shed blood for me. I accept your promise. I accept your provision subtracting nothing and absolutely adding nothing to him." You proclaim it to God.

You proclaim it to yourself, you proclaim it to God, you proclaim it to fellow Christians. It's good for me to watch you take the supper. It helps me. I need to see you saying, "Me and my family, our hope is in Jesus Christ." You need to see me take the supper as you say, "Pastor and his family, their hope is in Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Jesus Christ." We proclaim it to one another, our fellow Christians.

Fourthly, we proclaim it to the world unashamedly to any and everyone, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but holy lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock, I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." Now listen to me, I don't care if you're the wealthiest and most powerful businessman in this church, there needs to be times when you stand up straight and you're very clear out in the community and you say, "I want you to know something, I'm a wretched sinner and my hope is Jesus Christ." But this is one of the ways we do that. We just say to the whole world, "This is what we do. Look at what we do. We don't mind anyone knowing it."

Lastly, we proclaim it to sinners who need Jesus Christ. We're saying to them this day, "O, put your hope in him. Cash in your baptism you're trusting in and look to Jesus. Cash in your good works, your ethics, your morality you think helps get you to heaven. Cash that in. Turn from that and turn to Jesus Christ." We're saying to sinners anywhere and everywhere, "Look to Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Believe on Jesus. We are and you should, as a matter of fact, you must."

Now as we come to take the supper today, who can take it? You've got to understand something, not anybody can take this supper. Some of you are not allowed to take the supper. That doesn't mean we're any better than you, it just means you're in a different place spiritually perhaps. "Well, pastor, who can take the supper?" Well, let me say it this way, 1. you must be one of his called out ones. The calling of a sinner to salvation is one of the ways the Bible verbalizes getting saved. God calls you to himself. The word "ekklesia" is the word we translate "church" in the New Testament and almost every time the word "church" is used in the New Testament, it's talking about a local church. That's us, Grace Life Church of the Shoals, a local body of baptized believers. If God has not called you to himself out of the world. "How do I know I'm called, pastor?" It means you've seen your sin, you're aware of your wanting at the holy bar of God. You know righteously you should be judged but you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ and him alone, then you are one of his called out ones. He calls us through his Gospel, by his Spirit, and in his love.

Secondly, you need to be one of his called together ones. Have you joined a local church? Are you a member in good standing of a group of believers? Are you one of the called together ones? That means the local church. He calls us together in local churches to serve him. You do not have the option to serve him another way. The only New Testament example of serving Christ is in the fellowship of a local church. Although there are a lot of ministries out there and a lot of things going on, I'm certainly not saying they're all evil or bad but I can say this: I find no biblical support but for God's local churches. Remember that when you surf the internet and you're getting wisdom and insight from all these guys out there, and there's good stuff out there but if they're not emphasizing your loyalty to the local church first, they're wrong. You've got to understand there are some people out there that can teach some marvelous doctrine, they have great theology, but they miss the church. Are you listening to me? I think Satan's thrilled at that. I think he's thrilled at that. It's like somebody telling you everything about how to be an upstanding and good man except being faithful to your wife. Well, wait a minute, it doesn't matter if you're moral and upstanding and decent and respectable in 1,001 ways if you're not faithful to your wife. Some things are foundational, amen?

Are you one of God's called out ones? Are you one of God's called together ones? He calls us together in local churches. He calls us by his Spirit. Our togetherness is spiritual. You should not be able to explain our church. You should look over here and say, "Well, this guy is like this and this lady's like this and this guy's like that and that guy's different than those other guys. How do they all get together?" It's a spiritual thing.

There is some foolishness going on right now about targeting minority communities with the Gospel. We don't target anybody. We want everybody to come to faith in Christ and those God saves are welcome in his church. It doesn't matter the race. It doesn't matter the color of skin. It doesn't matter the background. We're not going to have some silly, man-centered, demographic manipulation to focus or target certain types of people. You might be targeting the wrong people. You do understand that as Christianity got going, God closed the Jews to the Gospel and he opened the door to the Gentiles. If some of those early church leaders had been as wise as some today are claiming to be, they might have tried to focus on the Jews and not focus on the Gentiles. They would have been backwards on God. Here's my point: you just try to reach everyone with the Gospel. We're not trying to get a quota of black people, a quota of white people, a quota of yellow people, we want all people to come to Christ and God can figure out what the mixture looks like at each local church. It's not our job to do that. That's manipulating. That's getting ahead of what the Spirit might be up to. We don't know what he's going to do and whom he's going to do it in.

So he calls us as his called out ones, we are his called together ones, and then the Lord's Supper reminds us we're his called home ones. He's called us home. He said in the Gospel of Mark, "I want to tell you something, I'm not going to drink of this cup again until I drink it new with you in My kingdom. You're headed home. Now while you're down here, I'm not present physically." The Roman church teaches that somehow when you take the juice and the wine, it literally becomes Jesus' body and his blood and Jesus literally dies for you again which is radically unbiblical. He's not physically present with us now, he's spiritually present with us now. One day, though, the Lord's Supper will cease and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will begin and he'll take the cup on that day and we'll have it new with him in his kingdom, then we'll be with him physically again like the early disciples were. We're his called home ones.

Now are you one of his called out ones? Are you one of his called together ones? Are you one of his called home ones? Then you're welcome to take the Lord's Supper.