

Acts 2: 42 and 46; “In the Breaking of Bread”, A Communion Sermon
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 4th, 2011,
In the Morning Worship Service.

For the past few Sundays we have been looking at the activities of the first Christians there in Jerusalem; activities which showed their sincere obedience to Christ. These activities of obedient devotion to Christ need to be seen in our church, in our day, just as much as they were seen in theirs. If you are sincere about your obedience to God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, you will continue steadfastly in the Apostle’s Doctrine and Fellowship; in the Breaking of Bread, and Prayers. This is a major part of what it means to be a true Christian; not only to believe in Christ for salvation, but also to work out your salvation in the context of the local church. To be steadfast means to regularly attend all the services of the church on Sunday. To be devoted to these activities is to give your heart to them; to worship God in and through them. It means to give yourself also to the people of God in that local church; not just to hang around with Christians in general sense. This is what we have seen thus far. Now, this morning we want to focus our attention on the Lord’s Supper, or what is called here; the breaking of bread. First of all this morning, I want to establish the truth that what is being spoken of here; the Breaking of Bread, is the Lord’s Supper. Secondly, I would like to establish the fact that the Breaking of Bread is a church ordinance. And thirdly, I would like to establish the truth that the Breaking of Bread is a means of grace to every believer. Our purpose here this morning is to remember the Lord Jesus and His dying for our sins. I will weave this through the points that I will give to you so that Christ will be honored and you will be built up in your faith.

1st of all – Let’s establish the truth that what is being spoken of here; the Breaking of Bread, is the Lord’s Supper.

How do we know that what is being referred to here in verse 42, is the Lord’s Supper, and not simply having a meal together? For as we look down four verses to verse 46 we find these words. “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” In that verse it is very clear that Luke is talking about their having their meals together with one another. But is it more than that? Yes, I think that we have warrant for saying that it is. In both of these references; the one in verse 42, and the second in verse 46, I believe that Luke is speaking not only of the Lord’s Supper, but of the Lord’s Supper celebration; as following a shared meal. This was the custom of the early church. Because they were spending so much time together; learning the New Covenant way of the Lord from the Apostles who were teaching them; they often ended up taking their meals together. And I believe that this practice grew up out of the original institution of the Lord’s Supper as we find it related to us in the gospels. Turn with me over to

Matthew 26, verse 17. “Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus , saying to Him, ‘Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?’” “And He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, ‘My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’” Now, notice, that this feast was not to be kept in the Temple; it was to be kept in a house; just like the original Passover in the book of Exodus relates. Exodus 12: 20 states – “You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.” Before eating the Passover meal, they had seven days of eating unleavened bread in their dwellings. On the final night, the slaying of the Passover lamb took place, and their applying the blood to the doorposts and the lintels of the house. That night was also the time when the Passover meal was eaten. But during the days of the unleavened bread; other food might be prepared, but “only that which everyone must eat—that only would be prepared.” (Exodus 12: 16) So ordinary meals were eaten during the time of the days of unleavened bread, and even in close proximity to the Passover Supper.

And in Matthew 26 we find Jesus and His disciples eating the Passover Supper meal and our Lord’s instituting His Supper right in the middle of that Passover Supper. In verse 26 of Matthew 26 it reads, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take eat; this is My body.’” It was, “as they were eating” the Passover meal; in this more private place; that Jesus instituted His Supper. This last observance of the Passover, in order for Jesus to fulfill the law, was observed in order that its real meaning would speak to the disciples of the truth that Jesus was going to become the fulfillment of the Passover Supper by His becoming “the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.” Right in the middle of the Passover meal, Jesus “took bread, and blessed it, and broke it and gave it to the disciples.” And right after their common and ordinary meals, the Apostles would set aside time for the observance of the Lord’s supper in these early days of the Church. Jesus took bread and broke it in that first Supper; and the Apostles took bread and broke it, and distributed it, in the days of the early church there in Jerusalem. Verse 42 is speaking about “the breaking of bread”. Let us understand this morning that a very real part of the Lord’s Supper; is the one who ministers, taking the bread and breaking it. This is what Jesus did at the very time of the Supper. This is what I believe should be done by us here in this church; beginning today. Even as our Confession, the 1689 Baptist Confession states in Chapter 30, paragraph 3. “The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed His ministers to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use, and to take and break the bread; to take the cup, and they communicating also themselves, to give both to the communicants.” Jesus set apart the Lord’s Supper in the middle of the Passover meal. The Apostles set aside the Lord’s Supper after a common meal. In a few minutes, I as your pastor, will set apart the common and ordinary elements of the bread and the grape juice for their holy use in our observance of

the Lord's Supper. I think that there is something very good which is being done in this; when the minister, publicly, and before the congregation; takes the bread and breaks it. This action "shows forth" the Lord's death in a way that breaking the bread all up, before-hand, does not. And so I am intending to lead our church back to this practice, which I began when I first became your pastor here. I began doing this years ago, but I was talked out of it by a well-meaning brother who thought that I was acting like a Roman Catholic priest in doing so. But I do not believe that I am in any way going back to Rome, or setting an un-Biblical example. Rather; I as a minister, am simply showing forth what Christ Himself did with the Apostles at the first Supper; what He did for all believers when He suffered and died on our behalf. I am intending to do what the Apostles, by their example, taught all pastors who would follow their teaching, to do. They broke the bread and they distributed it. Christ's body was broken for us; not privately and secretly, but publicly and openly before all the people. Therefore, I will take and break the bread this morning, publicly, before we distribute it.

This first real point that I am trying to make here in relation to the "breaking of bread"; is that in the times of the early church, they ate other food in the same time proximity to their partaking of the Lord's Supper. There were ordinary meals which preceded the observance of the Lord's Supper. And this went on, on a daily basis, for some time in the life of the early church, there in Jerusalem. This was a good thing in those amazing days after Pentecost. But it was not later on. As time went on, some bad practices grew up in the congregation at the church of Corinth in relation to the Lord's Supper, and their eating of these ordinary meals. You can see this if you turn over to 1 Corinthians 11: 20. "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper." "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk." "What!" "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" "Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?" "What shall I say to you?" "Shall I praise you in this?" "I do not praise you." Then he gives them to them what was delivered to him by the Lord Jesus Himself; that the Lord Jesus on the 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; do this in remembrance of Me." This is where the term "the breaking of bread" came from. It came from the example and the words of our Lord Jesus Himself. The breaking of bread that is being referred to here in Acts 2: 42 is the Lord's Supper.

Now 2ndly - I would like to establish the fact that the breaking of bread is a church ordinance.

In Mark's gospel in Chapter 14, verse 14, Jesus calls the room that they celebrated the Passover in, "a guest room". He further said to the disciples, that when they came to the house, that the man would "show them a large upper room, furnished and prepared." This was, I believe, to set the pattern for the coming local church in Jerusalem, and a pattern even for us today, in a general sense; in

our observance of the Lord's Supper. The pattern was to generally be; that the Lord's Supper would preferably be celebrated in a house type building, in a large enough room where all the disciples of the local church could gather. This kind of building or house that they met in, for the first Lord's Supper, was probably about the same size as the smaller church buildings of our own day. But when 3,000 came into the local church at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, this observance of the Lord's Supper could only realistically take place "from house to house". And this is what accounts for the words in verse 46 – "So continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." The Apostles teaching was taking place in a public place in the temple, but the Lord's Supper and the meal that was often associated with it, in those early days, was taking place in the houses of various of the saints. The breaking of bread in the early church, from house to house, took place under the direct supervision of the Apostles and their assistants. It was not "private communion". It was not just any saint deciding for himself when he would observe the Lord's Supper. But it was, then, and it is today, a church ordinance. The pastor, and those whom he delegates, administer this holy ordinance. Generally, it is an inside ordinance. That is not to say that it cannot be administered outside the walls of a church building, but it is an ordinance which requires a special self-examination. And as such; that examination probably does better inside a room, than outside of the building, as a general rule. Our much beloved hymn, #271 in the Trinity hymnal says, "How sweet and awful is the place with Christ within the doors; where everlasting love displays the choicest of her stores." "Where all our hearts, and all our tongues, join to admire the feast; each of us cries with thankful tongue, 'Lord why was I a guest?' It was a guest room they were in that day, for the observance of the first Lord's Supper. And you and I need to see and to remember that we are guests today at this; our Lord's Table.

You can see the outworking of these truths that I have been giving you; about this being a church ordinance, if you will turn over to Acts Chapter 20, verse 6. "But we," Luke says, "sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." "There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together." You see; here we find the disciples of the fellowship or the church of Troas met on the first day of the week for worship, and they gathered together "to break bread". This is the way that it is supposed to be. If you are a disciple of the Lord, you will continue steadfastly in the breaking of bread together with the church that you are hopefully a member of. Why should you do this? Because you want to remember Christ with the other disciples of your church. You want to keep the New Testament feast by breaking bread with the brethren. Look over at 1 Corinthians Chapter 5, and verse 4. There had been a problem with a man sinning

a terrible sin of sexual immorality; that he had had taken his father's wife to bed with himself. The church at Corinth had not mourned over this; but they had become proud of the fact that they were tolerating his sin, and continued to allow him to worship in their midst. Paul says, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Your glorying is not good." "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened." "For indeed, Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us." "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." These are truths are related to the importance of seeing the Lord's Supper as a Church ordinance. The church discipline that they would eventually enact on this man was a "punishment afflicted by the majority" of the members of that church. And it was related to the Lord's Supper in that they were, as a congregation, purging the sinful leaven from their midst, so that they might be a "new lump".

When you come to take the Lord's Supper in a few minutes, please remember that you are part of the body of Christ here. What you do, and how you live, affects the other believers here; and not just yourself; whether you live for righteousness, or for yourself and the world. Let's resolve when we partake of the Supper that each of us will be a strength to this body of Christ in this place. 1 Corinthians 10: 14. "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." "I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." Let us resolve, by God's grace this morning, that because we are partaking of the bread and the wine of Christ, that we are committing ourselves afresh to two things. The first is to put away all the idols of our hearts. And the second is to love the brethren and give ourselves more fully to them, and our work together, in the building of His church here in this place. Let us now come down front where we will observe the Lord's Supper, and break bread together.

Finally – And thirdly, I would like to establish the truth that the breaking of bread is a means of grace to every believer.

I would like you to turn with me over to Luke Chapter 24, verse 13. Here we find the story of two of Christ's very disappointed disciples; traveling on the road to Emmaus, on the third day following Christ's crucifixion. "Now behold two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem." "And they talked together of all these things which had happened." "So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." "But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him." "And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you

have with one another as you walk and are sad?” “Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’” “And He said to them, ‘What things?’” “So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.’” “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” “Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.” “Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us.” “When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.” “And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.” “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’” “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” “Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.” “But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’” “Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with the, that He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them.” “Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.” “And they said to one another, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’”

Now I read this passage to you, my beloved brethren, because I wanted you to see that the breaking of bread is meant to be a means of grace to every disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were outside when this confrontation took place. They were not in a church building. They had this most holy of conversations with Jesus beginning outside. They were not gathered with any local church, as this was before the Church had its birth on the day of Pentecost. But what they experienced that day was a means of grace to them. The Lord Jesus spoke to them the very word of God. He searched them with good questions. As a good Pastor and Shepherd of their souls, He convicted and convinced them of their slowness in believing in all of what the Scriptures had promised; concerning Himself and His sufferings, and His entering in to His glory. They did not yet see that He was referring to Himself. He expounded the Scriptures to them, showing them from Moses and the Prophets; how there were many things concerning the Christ that must have their fulfillment. But best of all, He was willing to “sit down at the table with them”; it must have been inside one of their homes. And it was there that “He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” This was not a Lord’s Supper service, but I want you to see that it was a means of grace to these men. His preaching and teaching followed by this act of “taking bread and breaking it”

were the very means to their souls, that they would come to believe in the resurrection of our Lord. “Their eyes were opened and they knew Him,” it says. They said, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked to us on the road?” This simple act of breaking the bread and giving it to them, was the means of grace to them that day; to be convinced of Christ’s resurrection, and His power to change their hearts from being sad and disappointed, to being believing. They then became zealous witnesses for Him, returning to Jerusalem and trying to convince the other disciples that He was risen from the dead. This is what can happen here today with you, if you will receive the truth of it to yourself now. Are you sad and disappointed that things have not turn out better in the furtherance of the kingdom of God here in this place? They recognize that Christ is with us here this morning in the breaking of bread, and let your heart take courage. Trust in the Lord. May this time renew your strength as you feed upon Christ’s faithfulness.