

How to take the Lord's Supper

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[0:00] Next. Habakkuk chapter 1. As I think I said last time, the contents page is your friend in finding Habakkuk.

! But hopefully as we look at it more and more we'll just be able to find it as we work our way through the minor prophets. If someone has a church Bible, do shout out a page number actually. Page 940. 940. There we go. The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. How long, Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen. Or cry out violence. But you do not say. Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me.

[1:09] There is strife. And conflict abounds. Therefore, the law is paralyzed. And justice never prevails.

The wicked hemming the righteous. So that justice is perverted. Look at the nations and watch. And be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians. That ruthless and impetuous people who sweep across the whole earth. To seize dwellings not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people.

They are a lord to themselves. And promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards. Fiercer than wolves at dusk.

[2:20] Their cavalry gallops headlong. Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle's eagle sweeping to devour.

They all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind. And gather prisoners like the sands.

They mock kings. And scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities.

By building earthen ramps. They capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind. And go on. Guilty people.

Whose strength is their gods. This is God's words. And we're going to look at it in a moment. But we'll sing another song.

[3:22] A marvelous song. I'm sure Habakkuk wondered. What are you doing Lord? God moves in a mysterious way.

His wonders to perform. We'll stand and sing. And then we'll have a look at Habakkuk. We'll sing a prayer. And ask for God's help as we look at his word together.

Our Father God. Thank you. That you speak to us. And Lord we pray particularly for your help today. As we look at a passage.

And maybe we scratch our heads. And wonder what are you doing? Lord help us. And speak to us. And encourage us.

Challenge us. Challenge us. Do us good we pray. Amen. Amen. I want to get you guys discussing as well during this.

[4:25] So a question to chat with the people around you. Is there ever such a thing as unanswered prayer? Chat with people around you.

People are saying.

Anybody have an answer to my question? Told you I was going to get you thinking. Isabel, thank you.

I believe there is an unanswered prayer. Oh, I think. Hang on. The mic's not on. No, I think it's just. Hello? Yeah, nice.

It's just us, Emma. Yeah, that's all right. No, basically. I believe there is an unanswered prayer. It's rare. But when we pray for something that is not good for us, God is not going to answer that

prayer. We don't understand why.

[5:35] But then it might come up later. And we might find later why it wasn't answered. And find out it was for our good. But is that answered? It's answered in a way you can't see.

So, yeah. For us, as human, it would be an unanswered prayer. From our end. From our point again. Yeah. From our vantage point.

Yeah. Any other thoughts, Phil? Excellent. There are places where God says he will not hear prayer. So, in the first chapter of Isaiah, he says, you spread out your hands to me in prayer, but your hands are full of blood.

Yeah. So, there are situations and people and actually issues for which he will not hear prayer. But I think for believing people, in the normal sense of it, that's a little bit different.

I mean, he does promise to hear our prayers. Excellent. Excellent. Any, what may be a final thought, if anyone has them? It's okay if you don't.

[6:41] That's fine. Hold the microphone. We'll use it. Oh, put it on the seat in front of you or something. There'll be more discussion in a moment.

Yeah. I think, I think the answer's been good. Mark helpfully said, God answers. Yes.

Yes. Or wait. Or no. Or actually, I think as we're going to see with Habakkuk. Yes. But in this way. Probably not in the way Habakkuk was expecting. Just by way of introduction, really. A few years ago, I had a pack of these that I was eating my way through.

Whisper bites. Lovely light and chocolatey deliciousness. when suddenly I took one and it had a hole in it.

[7:44] It was hollow. Well, this is not a whisper. Whisper is what makes it, the inside is what makes it a whisper, that light, bubbly stuff.

It's not right. So I had to complain. I had to complain to cabarees. And so I did. I tweeted. I'm not impressed with this hollow whisper bite that I found today, angry face emoji.

Maybe not the wisest thing to tweet. But I got a reply from cabarees. And they said, yes, we hear you. Fill in this form. So I filled in the form.

And I complained some more. And a week later, some posts arrived. And what was in the post? A one-pound voucher.

I wanted a lot more than that. I was expecting sort of a lifetime supply of chocolates. It wasn't the answer I was waiting for.

[8:51] A silly example, but maybe that's how we sometimes feel when we pray. We expect God to do something, maybe instantly, or something huge and amazing.

Sort out all our problems or deal with the big worldwide issues. And yet we feel often God's not hearing those prayers.

Or God's not doing what we want him to do. Maybe that's sometimes how we feel. I'd love us to chat for the next three or so minutes, again, with the people we're chatting to.

Read verse 5. And according to the Lord, how should Habakkuk feel about his answer to prayer? Because verse 5 is where the Lord's answer begins. And then read verse 6.

And how do you think that Habakkuk is actually feeling about this? Have a chat for the next few minutes. Thank you.

[10:25] How are we going? How are we going? How are we going? Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Anyone want to give it a go? Thanks. Thanks. I would say that he is utterly flabbergasted.

[13:09] Yes. Absolutely. Any other? Fearful. Fearful. Yeah. Petrified. Petrified. Yeah.

Yeah. I mean, for the sake of the recording. Petrified and fearful. Petrified and fearful. Absolutely. Steve's got his hand up. Of course, in verse two, he'd ask, how long would you make me look on violence?

And of course, in verse nine, he says, you ain't seen nothing yet. They all become intent on violence. Yes. Quite ironic, isn't it? Yeah. Yeah.

We're sort of left scratching our heads, aren't we, here? We'll pop the mic in front of you. Left scratching our heads here, thinking, why, Lord?

How long can this go for? What are you doing? I wanted you to do something, Habakkuk's probably thinking, but not that. And verse six, really, I think, is enough detail.

[14:18] I'm raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people who sweep across the whole earth to see dwellings not their own. That's probably enough detail for Habakkuk. You're raising up the Babylonians or Chaldeans, a big rising superpower in the world at Habakkuk's time.

They're going to come in. They're going to sweep God's people away into exile. Verse six would have been more than enough, but God gives plenty more details to Habakkuk.

And there's some pictures that we get to see here in a moment. So verse seven, there are feared and dreaded people. There are law to themselves.

They promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards. That's the first picture we have. I don't know 100% if that's a leopard, but Google says it is.

Horses swifter than leopards. Probably not literally, but he's painting a picture of how big and mighty and terrifying they are.

[15:28] Their horses are super fast, more than ready and quick and able to capture their enemies. And it goes on, their wolves are fiercer than, sorry, fiercer than wolves at dusk.

So I think we need to have the image of a wolf who's been waiting all day for its food and is just ready to pounce on its prey. That's how we're to see this Babylonian army, ready to pounce.

And then another image there is they fly like an eagle swooping to devour. And that's interesting.

Can we turn back to Deuteronomy 28? And there is a microphone around. Would somebody be up for reading?

Deuteronomy 28, 49 to 52. Maria, we're already at the microphones in front of you when you're ready.

[16:37] Deuteronomy 28, 49 to 52. The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young.

They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed.

They will leave you no grain, new wine or oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs, of your flocks, until you are ruined.

They will lay siege to all your cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down.

They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the Lord your God is giving you. Thank you. So we've got there in Deuteronomy 28, long before Habakkuk was around, that image of enemies like an eagle swooping to devour.

Written in the context of curses for the Lord's people if they do not obey him. And now we see that happening.

[18:14] They certainly, God's people certainly have turned away from him. Remember last time the law is paralyzed, God's word was not being followed. And so God is raising up these people like this eagle swooping to devour.

And we go on. And Steve has already pointed this out to us very helpfully.

Thank you, Steve. And verse 9. They all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like the sand.

Habakkuk's complaint was about violence. And God's answering his prayer by sending in even more violent people. What are you doing, God?

Maybe we think we should, we know how God should answer here. And it's not like this. But this is how God is answering. And look at the Babylonians and their attitude towards authority.

[19:23] Verse 10. They mock kings. They scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities by building earthen ramps. They capture them. Kings. Kings. People given the highest positions of authority by God.

They mock them. Rulers of any kind. They scoff at them. Fortified cities. They laugh at them because of their power and might. They can just capture them so easily, can't they, these Babylonians?

They're strong. Strong people. They are not God's people. God's raising them up, but they are not God's people.

Look, they're at the end of verse 11. They are guilty people whose strength is their God's. Their God is themselves. Their own strength.

And they have a lot of it. And they love it. They worship themselves. They are number one. They are strong.

[20:25] And they are powerful. They're a law unto themselves, verse 7 told us as well. They promote their own honor. It's all about themselves. It's all about me. They are not people trying to honor God at all.

So why is God allowing this? Why is God answering Habakkuk's prayer by sending an even more godless people? Why is God allowing evil to triumph?

What is going on? It fills us more with more questions than answers. Maybe Habakkuk himself is thinking, why did I ask? Two things I'd love to say from this passage.

First of all, I've given you the answer already. I was going to say, where is Habakkuk told to look? But I'll ask you anyway. Where is Habakkuk told to look?

The nations. Yeah. To look around. Not just in his own nation. He's looking at his own nation, seeing the violence. But he's told to look around.

[21:37] Look at the nations. And watch, he's told, verse 5. The Lord instructs him to take his eyes away from his own situation.

Look at the nations. And see what's going on. And he says, if you think I'm not doing anything, look and see with these Babylonians, this rising superpower.

They are being raised up and they will be used in order to judge my people who have turned from me to violence. You asked me, Habakkuk, why do you tolerate wrongdoing?

Well, my answer is that I don't. And I am raising up people to judge. Look around the world to see what I am doing.

But as you look at them, also see that my people are behaving like this people, really. These Babylonians, they are violent.

[22:49] They are a law unto themselves. And God's people, they are the same. That's not what God called them to.

God said through Moses, be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. But that's not what they're doing right now. The law is paralyzed.

God's word is dead. So as you look, Habakkuk, and see around the world, this is nothing new.

And for us, here today, when we cry out to God with our questions, when we wonder whether he is really answering our prayers, we can look around and see how God is working.

Maybe we'll be a bit more encouraged than Habakkuk was here. For example, we pray quite often, I think, for the Lord to build his church.

[24:01] And maybe as we look at Brighton, look at our own little church here, maybe we don't quite see how that is happening. Last week, some of us were at a conference in Eastbourne, and we heard from a man called Richard Pratt, an American man who has set up a ministry called Third Millennium Ministries, which seeks to train up church leaders around the world where there is just no theological education.

And he encouraged us by saying that the church on every continent, I think he said, other than Europe and North America, is growing so, so fast in some places.

And so we can be encouraged that that prayer, Lord, build your church, is being answered. The church is growing around the world. We may not see it so much here, but it is.

Look at the nations and see that that is happening. I wonder whether we ourselves need to be doing things like writing down prayers with praying and writing when God answers.

To remember ourselves, God answers prayer, God is working. When we hear of others' answers to prayer, be encouraged. God is working.

[25:40] Church members who are here, you've been sent trustees' annual reports. Wippee! I'm sure you're excited. But may I encourage you, if

you're tempted not to read them, to actually have a look.

I was writing down the elders' annual report and I was like, oh wow, this is actually really encouraging. Looking through a whole year of our church's life. God is working. Look around. God is working. But don't just look around. Also, I think Habakkuk's also encouraged to look up.

Look up. Look up. See, these words here, they are words of Yahweh. They are words of the living God Almighty.

Even though they are hard words, they are really hard words. They're a bitter pill for Habakkuk to swallow. Even though they may not make sense to Habakkuk right now as he's hearing them.

[26:47] They are from the everlasting God, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He sees the beginning to the end. He holds the future. Maybe you sung, maybe when you were younger, he's got the whole world in his hands.

I used to sing it in assembly. It's true. Be encouraged by that. That's who is speaking. And he is the one who says, I am raising up the Babylonians.

Not the Babylonians are raising themselves up. I am raising them up. I am sovereign. And it's under my control. This is all in my plan.

Let's be encouraged by some verses from Isaiah. Isaiah 40. Isaiah 21 to 26. And if someone else would love to have the microphone and read it to us, that would be lovely.

Isaiah 40. 21 to 26. Any offers? I think Joram's offering.

[28:03] Thank you. Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told to you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth. And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.

Who brings princes. Who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted. Scarcely so. Scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth.

When he blows on them and they wither. And the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me? That I should be like him? Says the Holy One.

Lift up your eye on high and see who created these. He who brings out their host by the number. Calling them all by name. By the greatness of his might.

[29:04] And because he is strong in power. Not one is missing. Thanks, Joram. As we read those verses, we can be encouraged. To lift up our eyes and see the one who is able to raise people up and bring people down.

Who raises up nations and brings them down. And he is the one whose throne will last forever. He is the one who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. He has been there from the beginning. Since the earth was founded.

He is the one who is in control. There is none above him. None before him. All of time is in his hands.

That's who is in control. And so even when we don't understand what God is doing or allowing.

[30:11] When we cry out to God, how long? When we cry out to the Lord, why?

Why are you allowing this? Why don't you seem to be listening, Lord? think. I know that you are mighty. I know that you're on the throne and I'm going to trust you.

Remember when the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies to be brutally murdered on a cross. They must have thought, yes, we've won. We've got him. He's dead. We're burying this one who claimed to be the king of the Jews. It felt like evil was triumphing for the disciples who locked themselves away in a room for fear of the authorities. They felt like evil was triumphing.

But this was God's deliberate plan and purposes for his world, for his people, for this world, for our good, for our salvation. Through the judgment that God is speaking to Habakkuk about, using the Babylonians, God is working in them. God is working in Habakkuk's situation.

And we can be sure, and we will see in Habakkuk, that the wicked will not stand. Let's have the final word in from Psalm 2. Psalm 2. Good place to turn.

[32:35] And I'll read these verses. Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

Remember the Babylonians, they mock kings, they scoff at rulers.

Verse 4. And then here's the conclusion of the psalm, verse 10.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The conclusion for people who are turning away from the Lord, who think they know better. His God is themselves. The conclusion is, serve the Lord with fear.

[34:26] Bow down before me. Kiss the Son. Find refuge in me. Don't be against him.

Don't be against him. That there will be times when it feels like our prayers go on onsets. There will be times when we look at our world and wonder, well, what, God, are you doing?

There will be times in our lives that we see things going on that will make us scratch our heads.

God, what are you doing? There are times, even right now, when we see nations are warring.

When it feels like the church is struggling. We feel like our loved ones are going through trials, or we ourselves are going through something nasty.

God, what are you doing? There will be times when it feels like evil is triumphing, and God is not there doing anything. It feels like our prayers are hitting just a brick wall, rather than being heard by Almighty God.

[35:42] I think Habakkuk helps us. Instead of burying our heads down in the sand and pretending it's not going on, or running around in a panic, Habakkuk helps us, doesn't he, to call out to him, to ask those questions, why, how long, but also to know that God is God, that he is the one raising up the Babylonians, that he is the one in control, that he is the one seated on his throne.

And though he may be working in mysterious ways, he is working his wonders to perform, and so we can watch it and wait, and be utterly amazed by his big plan for the world.

We need to trust him for that, and we must humbly bow down and say, I am not God, but I know you are, and I trust you. And that won't always be easy, but with the Lord's help, we can.

I'm going to stop there, and be good to pray in a moment, but firstly, let's just take a few moments, just to be quiet ourselves, that the Lord will have been speaking to us in different ways, maybe speaking, showing us some hard things, challenging us, encouraging us, maybe think of one particular thing, that you want to make sure you don't forget, and take through into the week.

And pray about that in these next minute or two, and then I'll lead us in a prayer. Amen. Amen.

[37:49] We, God, the one enthroned above the circle of the earth, we come before you. To you we are like tiny grasshoppers, for you stretch out the heavens like a canopy, and spread them out like a tent to live in, you bring princes to naught, and you reduce the rulers of this world to nothing.

Lord, you are the one we come to. You are the one we look up to. And so, Father, we, we come before your throne once again, and we look at this world and we wonder, why do you tolerate the evil that is going on?

What are you doing, Lord? Lord, we cry out for peace, but it feels like there is no peace.

But Lord, we thank you that this world is in your hands. You are sovereign over all things. We thank you that you know what the future brings.

And we do not. Father, we pray that you would help us to bow down before you and to trust you.

And we thank you, Father, that when it feels like evil is triumphing, triumphing, you are triumphing.

[39:29] You are the one who is in control of all things. We see that at the cross, Lord, where your purposes for our salvation were being worked out. Lord, help us not to forget the cross.

Help us to remember and to rejoice in the Lord Jesus, our Savior, and our great salvation. help us through this week in whatever we're going to face.

As we don't know, you do. Help us this week to look to you, to look around and see the different ways you're working and to look up to your throne where you are seated and in control.

Lord, we praise you that this is you. This is who our God is. Help us to trust you. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to sing two songs before we finish this evening. DIY had to change the toilet flush handle on our toilet.

[40:46] It was not working properly. And I'm no good at DIY. I don't really have much knowledge. And so, part of the way I worked out how to do it, other than talking to Phil, which was great, I also have YouTube, which is great.

So, Google, how do you do this? And so, I Googled how to replace a toilet flush handle lever, whatever it says there. And this guy came up and watched this video who explained it so quickly. It looked so easy. It wasn't quite as straightforward as it seemed. But in the end, I was able to do it. And partly thanks to this YouTube video.

And I guess that's what we might do if we want to work out how to do something nowadays. We will go to YouTube or go to Google. How do we do this? And this morning, we're thinking how to take the Lord's Supper.

How do we do it? And maybe you could go to YouTube and maybe you could find some really good answers. Maybe you could, might find some terrible answers as well.

[41:58] But YouTube may help you. But actually this morning, we're coming to the words of the living God. Which I think is a much better place for us to turn to this morning.

And we're looking at that passage that Phil read for us so helpfully. I've got five points for you this morning. Two are long. Three are very brief.

So don't panic when I haven't finished number two after quite a while. So that's where we're going.

Firstly, unity. We saw last week the Lord Jesus giving his disciples the Lord's Supper.

He's graciously given us this meal. And one of the reasons, one of the things that we're doing as we take the Lord's Supper is we're showing our unity.

Turn back to chapter 10 and verse 16. Paul writes this, It is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ.

[43:13] And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ. As we take the bread and cup together, we show our unity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what that word participation kind of means really. The word fellowship could be used. We are showing we are one together in the Lord Jesus Christ because he's shed his blood for us.

He's given his body in death on a cross for us. And so in taking the bread and cup, we're saying we're united with him in his death.

That death he died, he died in my place. My sinful nature, it died with him on the cross. But our unity goes even wider than that when we're sharing the bread and cup.

See what Paul says in verse 17 there of chapter 10. Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body for we all share the one loaf.

[44:27] Christ's body, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 12 just a few weeks ago, is the church. Christ is the head of the body and we make up the different parts of it.

Like a body, many parts, but one. And so as we take the bread and cup, it expresses our unity with the Lord Jesus Christ, our saviour, but also with those around us, others who have found salvation in him, the body of Christ.

And so back in our passage, 1133, Paul says this, so then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.

As Christ's body, as the local church, we should eat bread and wine together to display our unity. Just as an aside here, I'm convinced from the scriptures that the Lord's Supper is a meal for the church.

Paul's saying that here, 1133, so then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. It's not something we do on our own at home, it's something we do together in the life of the local church.

[45:56] It's a meal that the Lord Jesus has graciously given for his church. So in the how-to guide of communion, number one, we take it together to display our unity with Christ, our Savior, and with one another.

But we also see in this passage how not to do it. How not to do it. So verse 17, Paul said in the following directives, I have no praise for you for your meetings do more harm than good.

Imagine if Phil got up to start the service this morning and he said that to us. I have no praise for you. Your meetings do more harm than good. That would be an encouragement, wouldn't it? Well, that's the case for this Corinthian church. they're a mess, actually. Verse 20, so then when you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you are eating.

So what are they doing if they're not taking the Lord's supper when they're coming together? What are they doing if their meetings are doing all this harm? Well, verse 21, it says this, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers.

[47:23] As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. It seems that they took the Lord's supper in the context of a meal, a bit like our church lunches that we have here, where we all orderly queue up to take the many varieties of food that we have.

I think our church lunches work well, but in Corinth, they didn't work well. Here's what a commentator says, Don Carson, in the first century, most people in the Greco-Roman world outside of Jewish Christian circles didn't operate on a seven-day cycle.

If Christians were going to gather on the first day of the week as they did, they had to meet early in the morning or late at night. So Sundays were different back then. People would have had to work and their meetings, as this commentator says, they'll meet early in the morning or late at night, so it's very different.

In the Corinth church, they would have had rich people and poor people, a whole mixture of people together. And those rich people, they could get there early, they could get there on time, and they could bring their caviar sandwiches and their fine wines to eat together, whilst the poorer people, they may get there a lot later, and maybe all they'd have is a bit of dry bread they'd found in their master's larder.

And they'd turn up and they'd find all these people having eaten well, feasted well, merry and bright because of all the wine they've drunk.

[49:15] Paul says, some are hungry, whilst others are full, are drunk. It was a mess. It was not displaying unity.

So Paul is pretty angry with them, actually. Verse 22, don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing?

What should I say to you? Should I praise you? Certainly not in this matter. He's angry with them. They didn't wait for one another. They had no interest in anyone but themselves in taking, in eating in this way. No unity.

The Lord's Supper, it's a gracious gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, who we remember did something that was far from selfish. He was a servant king.

[50:22] He came to give his life as a ransom for many. He came to serve, not to be served. That's not selfish. But these Corinthian Christians, they are coming selfishly.

We'll have our full feast whilst others, those poor people, they get there late, they're they'll have their bit of bread and that's it.

It's a mess. We should not be coming selfishly, desiring to be full with our own food as we come to the Lord's Supper.

We should come humbly. We should come remembering our unworthiness, unworthiness.

Remember our unity with the Lord Jesus Christ who we so need to forgive us our sins.

Come remembering all our brothers and sisters who we now find we are united to. We have a new family being in Christ.

[51:33] And so this is Paul's conclusion. Verse 33, so then my brothers and sisters, when you gather together, you should all eat together. That's Paul's conclusion.

And in terms of our own church's life and practice, that we're going to be talking about some of us on Wednesday evening, I think we're finding that that 10 o'clock communion services is a struggle for some people to get tea.

And we're not gathering all together and eating all together as Paul would encourage us to. And maybe that's because some aren't making the effort to be there, but I also think for some that it's a real struggle to be there.

For people who live further afield, for people who find parking prices really difficult on a normal Sunday, let alone paying for an extra hour or two on those communion weeks.

People who have children who it's hard to get out the door at 10.30 in the morning, let alone 9.30 in the morning. So, something for us to think about as we read those words of Paul in verse 33.

[52:54] If we should be eating together with as many of our brothers and sisters as possible, maybe we should consider changing the way we do it.

Fuel for our discussion. So, in the how-to guide of communion, number one, we take it together. Number two, remembrance.

Remembrance. Every year in our nation's life, we have remembrance day, a time of remembrance. We pause for two minutes to remember people who have given their lives in war, who have made sacrifices to leave homes and friends and family to fight on our behalf.

love. And in that time, we'll wear a symbol. We'll wear poppies, which were all over fields as men fought in World War I.

Oh, every time we gather for the Lord's Supper, we're doing a similar thing. We meet in remembrance of one who has given his life for us.

[54:08] And we have symbols, not of poppies, but of bread and wine in order to help us remember him. And Jesus has graciously given himself for us in order for that to happen.

Verse 24, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Remembering is a key thing. But before we get to that, verse 24, what does Paul say before that?

Verse 23. He says, for I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus on the night who was betrayed took bread. Interesting thing to note on these verses.

Where it says, passed on to you and betrayed, that's pretty much the same word that Paul uses there. And so it could be translated this. For I received from the Lord what I also handed over to you.

The Lord Jesus on the night that he was handed over took bread. I shouldn't have put to you on that. That's Daniel's translation, not the best.

[55:19] But handed over to you is the point there. Jesus handed this meal over to his church on the very night in which he himself was handed over by his betrayer, Judas, to evil men who put him on a cruel cross.

The Lord Jesus as he went to the cross was doing that for his people. He was thinking of us even in that meal that he shared with his disciples.

He was thinking of his people, his church, as he was being handed over to death, even death on a cross. That's what we're remembering in the bread and wine.

It's a gracious gift given to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it's right that we pause and we remember as Jesus has told us to.

Verse 24, do this in remembrance of me. Because we forget all too often, don't we? Since I've come here to Calvary, I've been so encouraged by many of you just having a real hunger for getting into the Bible, the word of God, for dealing with various topics in the Christian life, for growing in our biblical knowledge.

[56:43] But as we do that, there's a danger that we can forget the basics, that we forget the cross. We don't want to go far away from the cross because we need the cross.

We need the Lord Jesus. That's our salvation that we see as we look at the cross. We forget so easily.

Maybe you kind of sighed when you heard, we're spending another week thinking about communion. Not this again, I know it. And many of you do, and that's great.

But we need to keep remembering. It's an important thing. The Lord Jesus Christ has graciously given us this meal to remember him.

We need the cross. It's at the cross where we should fall down in humility and weep for the sin that took Jesus there.

[57:55] It's at the cross that we should fall down in humility and give great thanks and praise to our Saviour for being there for us. Facing the wrath of God for us.

So we should never move far from the cross. So it's right that we pause and remember as Jesus has asked us to commanded us to.

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.

See first of all he gave thanks when he took the bread. it's what you do when you have a meal isn't it? You give thanks. Maybe you get invited out to somewhere and you bring some chocolates or some flowers or something and say thank you for having us at this meal or if you're out for a meal maybe you'll give a tip to the staff at the restaurant you're at to say thank you thank you for serving me this food.

You say thank you. Jesus begins the meal by giving thanks and so it is right that when we come round the Lord's table we give thanks to the Lord Jesus who's graciously given it to us.

[59:24] Give thanks to the Lord Jesus who's willingly given his life for us. And then what do we do? Well Jesus took bread and he broke it.

We're told in the crucifixion accounts not one of Jesus' bones were broken. We're not breaking it because of that but we're breaking it because he broke it and shared it with his people.

It's given for you take take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me. And then there's the cup. verse 25 in the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. In the cup we see the new covenant signed, sealed and delivered to us.

We thought about those words from Jeremiah last week when he told us about the new covenant. means new hearts with the law of God ridden on our hearts because we in ourselves we cannot obey them.

[60:43] We need God to work in our hearts to change our hearts. The new covenant which says you're forgiven, I will remember your wickedness no more.

Our God is gracious. That's what we see as we take the cup. and it took the shedding of Jesus' blood for you to bring about that new covenant.

So we look at the blood, we look at the cup and we see the blood of Christ and we rejoice in the new covenant. we rejoice because in that blood we can see and we can know that he who began a good work in us will see its fruit to completion until the day of Jesus Christ because the new covenant has been signed, sealed and delivered in the blood of Christ shed for us.

That's what we remember. Before moving on to the next point, I thought it was worth saying this that as I'm sure we'll know, the Christian church over centuries has been split by various views of communion.

The Roman Catholic view is that the bread and wine, they literally change into the body and blood of Jesus. That's not our view as a church. church. Another view is that it's a memorial.

[62:18] So we simply just use the bread and the wine to remember. And in one sense, absolutely yes, amen to that. But actually, I think I want to go a little bit further than that.

And John Calvin is very helpful, an old theologian on this. And he says that Christ is spiritually present.

in a special way as we share the bread and wine. Apparently, Calvin, he uses the term spiritual eating, which means that simply eating by faith, as we partake of the bread and wine, we see the body and blood of Christ.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who pours the life of Christ into us. I was thinking about it in this way. This week, it was my birthday.

I received an Amazon gift card. This has got ten pounds on it. Now, if I take this into a shop around the corner, I cannot spend this.

[63:32] This is not ten pounds money. But someone has paid ten pounds to Amazon so that I can then spend this card on Amazon.

Hopefully, this makes some sort of sense. Similarly, in the bread and wine, they are not Jesus' body and blood. Just like that voucher is not a ten pound note.

It is not money. And Jesus, on the cross, hung there in his body and shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

And so now, we view that bread and wine not just as merely bread and wine, but we view them as Jesus' body and blood. Not literally, but by faith.

That's what we see. as we look, as we touch, as we taste. We are feeding upon Christ, his body and blood, which is one salvation for us.

[64:46] that's what we're doing as we remember. And I think viewing it like that agrees with what Paul says in 10 verse 16.

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

Christ. I think there's more than just the bread and wine being simply just symbols. They are, but they're more. By faith, we see them as the body and blood of Christ.

Not literally. That's what we see by faith. That doesn't make sense. We can chat about it some more at some other time. more briefly.

Three more points. Very brief points. Thirdly, as we take communion, this meal that the Lord Jesus has graciously given us, we proclaim. Look there, verse 26.

[65:54] For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. As we take that little bit of bread, we're proclaiming that Jesus has died for me in my place on the cross.

I'm taking and eating. That's what I believe as I take this. I'm proclaiming that truth. And the same with the wine. We take it and we're proclaiming, Jesus has shed his blood for me.

And I think it's a powerful visual proclamation of the gospel. As we take it as sinners, so in need of a savior, it's a visual proclamation of the gospel.

We're preaching the gospel to one another as we take it. And I think it's very okay if you're not a Christian to be in those meetings, not taking the bread and wine for yourself, but seeing what's going on.

It's okay. Because as that's happening, the gospel is being proclaimed. proclaimed. And it's okay for us as Christians to think that someone might feel excluded who's not a Christian.

[67:19] Because that's true. And we pray that God will work powerfully through this visual proclamation of the gospel to speak to people, to show them the Lord Jesus who is seen in this meal.

So number three in the how-to guide of communion, we do it to proclaim the gospel. Number four, we anticipate or look forward to his coming.

There's all sorts of looking in communion. We look back to the past, we remember what Jesus has done for us. we look around at his body, at other Christians, and we look forward, we anticipate the future.

That's what verse 26 says. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. You see, in the bread and the wine, we see our Savior who died, but we also see and we look forward to the risen Christ and his return.

when he'll bring us home, we can feast with him forever. Revelation 19, then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder shouting, Hallelujah, for our Lord God Almighty reigns.

[68:51] Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen and bright and clean was given her to wear.

Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people. Then the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

And he added, these words are true. So as we take the bread and wine, we're looking forward to another meal, feasting at the wedding supper of the Lamb in glory, in eternity.

So as we take and eat, we anticipate the future. And number five, we need discernment. Verse 27, so then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Understandably, when we read that verse and the verses following it, we get nervous. Oh, hang on, am I taking this unworthily? I want to say in one sense, all of us are unworthy.

[70:15] We're unworthy sinners in need of the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. if we're trusting in that, we can come to the table, not because we're worthy in and of ourselves, but because we see that our

Savior has forgiven us, has cleansed us from our sins.

So what is Paul saying? How do we take it in an unworthy manner? verse 28, everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ and eat and drink judgment on themselves. how does that happen?

Of course, if an unbeliever takes communion, they're not discerning the body of Christ, but primarily here, I think Paul is writing to Christians.

He's writing to believers, to a church, and he's writing to a church where they are not discerning the body of Christ, meaning the people, the church.

[71:41] Do you remember what we said in verse 21? For when you were eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. They're leaving people out, they're excluding people, they're doing it selfishly.

I think in context we understand verse 29 are speaking about our relationships with one another. Before we come to the table, do we need to say sorry to another person in the church for something we've said to them?

Have we fallen out with someone? Do we need to be reconciled back to one another before we come to the Lord's table? people? I think that's what Paul is talking about here in these verses.

All of us come as sinners who need to confess our sins before God and particularly talking about do we need to say sorry to a brother or sister in Christ before we come?

Before we come rejoicing in our saviour, rejoicing in him who's given his body and shed his blood for our salvation.

[73:11] So how do we take the Lord's supper? Well we take it in unity together together and with the Lord Jesus Christ. We take it in remembrance of Jesus' death for us.

We take it to proclaim the gospel to those who are present. We take it to anticipate the future when we'll get to feast forever with Jesus our saviour and his people.

And we should take it discerning the body of Christ, remembering our relationships with one another, whom we are united together in the Lord Jesus. I'm sure there's much more we could have said, but hopefully this is helpful fuel for discussion.

And if you want to put this into practice, this evening is an opportunity. Jerome will lead us in our communion meeting tonight. come along and let's do these things together.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your words. We thank you, first of all, as we thought about the Lord's supper, we thought about it because it points us to the Lord Jesus who has died on the cross for us, who has shed his blood for us.

[74:42] Thank you that we see him in the bread and the wine. And thank you for uniting us together with other brothers and sisters in Christ here in this church family.

And Father, we pray particularly for the discussions that the members will have on Wednesday. We pray for your help and for your wisdom as we help one another to continue to be able to take this meal, which is a blessing to the church, which Jesus has graciously given us.

So help us, we pray. Give us your wisdom, we ask. And we pray that we would be glorifying you in the life of our church.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.