

# Thinking Carefully About Communion

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Date: 30 June 2013

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[ 0 : 00 ] I would like you to turn your Bibles this morning to the passage that is going to serve truthfully! only as the doorway to where we go as we think about the Lord's table.

As we go to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we are going to just pick up on a recurring phrase as the starting point, and then we are going to use that to begin to think along the lines of what is said. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is a passage in which the apostle writes to the church at Corinth, and instead of encouraging them and kind of saying, man, I'm really glad to hear about how you go about the Lord's table, he writes to rebuke and correct them.

In fact, he goes on to say something that is a real startling statement. He says, what you're doing is not communion. And the reason for that is that what they were engaged in had nothing to do with the Lord's table actually and the purpose of it.

They were all wrapped up in themselves. So here's what I want us to think about before we actually come to the table. If you look there in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 24, it says, We see a very similar statement made in verse 25.

[ 1 : 45 ] He says, In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

We're going to think about remembering. Thursday morning, I awakened fairly early. I love the summertime because I like to wake up to the light.

I don't like alarms. Is there anybody else like me? I mean, you know, whenever the sun is up, I think it's appropriate, it's God-honoring and blah, blah, blah, to be out of bed. You know, other people don't think that way.

But I love getting up early and enjoying time with the Lord. And Thursday was a little different day in that it was a day that Judith and I celebrated our 43rd anniversary.

And I have to tell you, I laid there in bed for a while. And I, first of all, thank the Lord for the day.

[ 2 : 51 ] But then, secondly, I just, I stopped and thanked the Lord for the blessing of her saying, I do to me, 43 years ago. And for the blessing that that has been. And later through the day, I kept on reviewing some of the particulars of our relationship and the incredible blessing that she has been to me in so many different ways.

I will tell you that I think it's appropriate to give thought periodically to some of the blessings that you've received. And while Judith and I enjoy our relationship and there's not a night that goes by, that at the end I do not say, I love you to her and she says it to me.

And we often enjoy one another's company and speak of the blessing. I got to tell you, we had a blast raising four kids. But empty nesting is absolutely wonderful.

There is no competition. How many of you understand what I said? I like it.

So, we spend time thanking the Lord for the relationship and just thinking about the richness of it.

And I bring that to you because that thoughtfulness and that intentionality and thinking about what that relationship is, is something that amplifies the blessing of it.

[ 4 : 15 ] And so, when we look at the passage this morning and we see the Spirit of God instruct us as believers and say, you need to show, you need to think about what Christ has done for you.

That is the purpose of what we are going to engage in this morning. And as we take these elements, I want you to understand that along with taking these elements, I want you to think consciously and deliberately about the blessing of your relationship, your salvation, and the richness of what you have received through the finished work of Christ.

Don't just go through it as a routine. But ask the Spirit of God to engage your heart in worship that is thoughtful and that is honorable.

There are a lot of different things that we could think about in relationship to what Christ has done for us. And I want us to begin with probably one of the things that stands out in my own thinking, perhaps the most significantly, for a number of different reasons, not the least of which is how often it is mentioned in Scripture, and that is thinking about His love.

As you take these elements, the bread and the cup, this morning, I trust that one of the things that goes through your mind is that you think to yourself that this bread and this cup remind you that Christ loves you personally.

[ 5 : 38 ] He knows your name. You are precious to Him. The Psalms and elsewhere in the Scripture, it talks about how amazing and how incredible, how unbelievable it is that God thinks about us.

But it's more than that. Not just that He thinks about us, but that He has set His love upon us. I think about a passage, and I want you to look at it with me just for a moment over in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 14.

Listen to what it says in the text there. It says, And the reminder that the apostle is giving here is that the reality of Christ's love for us is a life-controlling thought.

And I ask you the question practically as you think about your life, how dominating is the reality of the love of Christ in your life? How significant, how much of a priority is the fact and the reality of the love of Christ?

It is something that should flood our thoughts on a regular basis and leave us both with humility and passion to please Him. As I think about the breadth of Scripture that deals with the love of Christ and God's love in broad terms, I can't help but go back as I was listening to the music this morning.

[ 7 : 10 ] Guess what one of the things was that I was doing? Does anybody have an idea? What was Pastor doing as he was listening to the songs? I was processing the song against the backdrop of various passages of Scripture.

And we were singing a passage about his everlasting love, and I was thinking about Psalm 136. How many of you know Psalm 136 in broad terms?

How does it, how does it, what does it repeat? For his steadfast love endures forever. And by the way, does it say it once, twice?

It says it every single verse. Now, by the way, that is repetition for a purpose, isn't it? That purpose is to drive the reality of the unfailing love of God for us firmly into our little brain that struggles a great deal with that reality.

Jesus Himself spoke about His love for us. He spoke about His love for His disciples. Over in John chapter 15, verse 13, as Jesus was explaining the issue of the cross, He said this, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends.

[ 8 : 24 ] And as you take that bread and you take that cup, and as you are meditating upon the reality of what that represents, yes, it represents the death of Christ, but I want you also to think to yourself consciously and deliberately, this reminds me that Jesus loves me.

He loves me personally, and He loves me with an unfailing, never-changing love that doesn't give up.

I want to encourage you to know that as the elements are being passed, one of the things that I trust we will do is that we as a fellowship will share different passages of Scripture that have to do with the love of Christ, or have to do with the substitutionary atonement, with His dying in our place, or have to do with some other thought in relationship to the issue of salvation.

So having warned you in advance, what should you be doing? Kind of multitasking, I know, but you're now beginning to think what? Caleb, what are you beginning to think?

You're a deacon, bud. Caleb's beginning to think about a Bible passage. Jared, you're thinking about a Bible passage, aren't you?

[ 9 : 42 ] Emily, you're thinking about a Bible passage. Emily's looking up on her phone. I can see it going like this. Okay. I may call on you. And so having been warned in advance that I might call on you, by the way, Sam, where are you?

Sam, my son. Grandson. Sam, my son, is back there. You're going to have a passage of Scripture, right? I stole it? Well, you can... He's his mother's child.

That's what it is. Okay. We're going to think, we're going to spend time sharing passages of Scripture that are significant to us, right?

I just want to whet your appetite for doing that. But when we take the bread and we take the cup, one of the things that I want you to do is I want you to think to yourself, Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. There's a second thought that I want you to have as we come to this subject. And I want you to think about the fact that he died in your place.

[10:54] I want you to think about his atonement. The Bible is quite clear that Jesus didn't die for his own sins. We are in, or we were in, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and so let me just read verse 21 that confirms the reality of the fact that he didn't die for his own sins.

It says, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The Scriptures make it undeniably clear that Christ didn't die for his own sins.

And I remind you that the reality of Scripture is that sin has consequences, doesn't it? We know what the Scriptures say. It says, For the wages of sin are death.

Pastor Saul gave me the privilege on Friday evening of sharing the gospel, and it was my privilege just to go over in such simple vocabulary the reality of the fact that Scripture tells us that all have fallen short of the glory of God.

And the consequences of our sinfulness is that there is the penalty of everlasting death and suffering in hell. And yet that same passage of Scripture where it talks about the wages of sin also tells us that the gift of God is what?

[12:12] It's eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so when you think about the reality of his atonement, the fact that he suffered in your place, we recognize Jesus didn't die for his sins.

He died for mine. He died for yours. If there's probably one passage that presses this together in just such a startlingly clear way, it would be the book of Isaiah in chapter 53.

And so I want you to turn back there, if you would, to Isaiah chapter 53 for a minute and mark what the prophet has to say regarding Jesus' suffering in our place.

As Isaiah launches into this passage, he begins there in verse 1 by making a comment that even today is poignant in reminding us of how incredible the truth of God's plan of redemption is.

He says there in verse 1, Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? In that passage, as we work our way through it, we find there beginning in 5 and 6 that the Scriptures make it clear that Christ suffered in our place.

[13:29] He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

After a person has committed a crime and they have been judged and found condemned, one of the things that follows in a judicial system is that there is a penalty that has to be paid.

And the individual, one way or another, satisfies that debt by being incarcerated or something appropriate to the crime that's been committed. The reality of the fact is that Scripture makes it clear that because of our sin, all of us stand condemned before a holy God.

And the penalty for our sin is everlasting suffering in hell. And yet the Scripture tells us that Christ died in our place. He died for me.

He died for you. And as you read there in verse 5 and 6, it says, He did this for us. And in verse 6, All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

[14:37] And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. As you read on in the passage, there's something else, and we're going to develop that a little bit more in just a moment, but mark the fact that not only that he suffered in our place, but recognize in 8 and 9 that he was innocent and that he endured our judgment.

Let me read it to you. By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Have you ever been struck as you have been reading through the Gospels of how often it's said of this thing about Jesus, it's said that in doing such and such he fulfilled the Scriptures.

He fulfilled the Scriptures. He fulfilled the Scriptures. And it's just incredible to stop and realize that things that were prophetically uttered hundreds and hundreds, thousands of years ago, took place at the appropriate time and Christ satisfied all the predictive statements that were made about him.

Here in this passage in 8 and 9, we're reminded Jesus, where he was buried, who he was crucified with.

[16:07] And we understand that even though he was innocent, he suffered this and he suffered it for us. Mark what it says also in verse 10 and 11, and I want you just to mark there, it says, yet it was the will, it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

One of the things that has been pawned off on individuals is that, well, the crucifixion really didn't happen and that's not true, it did. Another thing that has been stated is that, well, the crucifixion was just kind of a judicial accident.

It was something that, things got out of hand and bad things happened. That's not what the Scriptures tell us at all. The reality of the matter is that Christ suffered for us and he took our place. And as it says here in verse 10, it was the will, as it says in the King James, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him. God planned this. And so, I want us to recognize that the Scriptures make it clear that we are to remember Christ.

One of the things that I encourage you to do this morning is remember that he loves you personally. In the circumstances, in the setting, in the difficulties, and the challenges that you have, in the moment of your life, I want you to remind yourself overarching all of those things is the reality of the never-failing love of Christ.

[17:36] I want you to remind yourself also that he has suffered in your place. And then third, as we play off this verse 10 here in Isaiah 53, I want you to recognize that all of this happened according to his plan.

As you hold the bread and hold the cup, I want you to understand that your salvation, the plan of redemption, was something that was carefully orchestrated and thought out before the creation of the world.

Look at a couple different passages that make this issue clear that Christ's crucifixion was not just some kind of blip on the radar, but it was actually something that happened according to divine plan.

In your Bible, if you would, look at Acts 2, verse 23. Acts 2, verse 23. Men of Israel, hear the words of Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan, definite plan.

[18:51] How many of you have had definite plans that haven't worked out well because other people were involved in them? This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and for knowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Acts chapter 4, verse 27 and 28. As the early church faced its persecution, it's very interesting to see how they responded to it.

They didn't take to the streets. They didn't riot. What they did was they went to prayer. And there in verse 27 and 28, let me read this to you.

For truly in this city there are gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you appointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

I think about the passage in 1 Peter chapter 1 and go there. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 18 through 20.

[20:32] Jude Jude Jude knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you. I revel in the creative genius of our God.

I think you do too. Judith and I enjoy landscaping to a certain degree and planting flowers and watching them come up, and I just marvel at the variety.

Unbelievable. You know, I'm very glad that God thought of doing flowers with so much more variety than I would have thought of doing flowers.

Yeah, flower. Red, dot in the center, that's it. You know, it's a little bit, my flowers would be something like this and no more. God's creativity in creation pales against the issue of salvation.

[22:07] He knew you and ordained your salvation and put the details of your deliverance from the bondage of sin into place.

And this morning, as you come to this table and you take that bread and you take that cup, one of the things that I want you to do is I want you to think, and he planned this before it all started. Let me have you think of one more thing, and we come back to this, to the passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. There is a very interesting sense in which the majority of thinking about the Lord's table is about the past.

This is what Jesus did. This is what he did for me. This is his heart. But I want you to think a little bit now, if you will, on verse 26.

It says, For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. Now here's the part I want you to think about with me.

[ 23 : 20 ] Till he comes. Till he comes. His coming is understood in the Scriptures as being significant to the believer.

In fact, I would say that that's probably one of the things that would be a fair question to ask yourself. Oh, sure, I say I'm a Christian.

I mean, you know what? I grew up in a Christian home. I know about Jesus. But here's the question. Is your heart thinking affectionately about the reality of his return?

If he is real and he is significant, should we think about his return? The Scriptures make it very, very clear that the early church was just caught up in anticipating Christ's return.

And every time they would take the bread and they would take the cup and they'd say, Man, Jesus died for me. They would say, And I am reminding myself of the significance of his death for me until he comes back.

[ 24 : 36 ] When he returns, When he returns, there will be two different responses.

Do you follow that? Do you follow that? Unbelievers will be terrified at the clear evidence of their eternal condemnation.

Those who are believers at the conclusion of the tribulation, do you know what their hearts are going to be like?

It is even so come Lord Jesus, right? I wonder, I wonder, This morning, how real is the prospect of Christ's return?

How dominating is that thought? How central is that to the affections and interests of your heart? I'm going to ask, and I do want you to remember, there are a couple different things that we are going to work at together this morning.

[ 25 : 59 ] Let me give you a little bit of an intro to the way that we are going to do things. You'll notice that we don't have chairs up here at the front, right? Now, you understand that that's because of...