

Thoughts on What We Do in Celebrating the Lord's Table

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Date: 29 March 2015

[0 : 0 0] I would like you to begin our time in the scriptures together this morning by turning to Romans! chapter 6 verse 23 many of you probably know it by heart you know it by memory but if i were to take! what is the bible focus of our time together this morning and kind of press it together into a single text this would probably be my choice how many of you know Romans chapter 6 verse 23 by heart you take a stab at it and you'll get there okay for the wages of sin is death what happens when we sin the outcome is eventual death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord I trust that's a verse that that you know I mean that that if you were to kind of compress your life down into one central statement about who you are and what counts as supremely important that that text would be one of those that you hold on to because at the heart of our life and our existence is this issue of whether or not we are in relationship with Christ and were it not for the fact that God sent his son to die on the cross for my sins and for your sins the truth of the matter is is that we would not have the privilege and the hope of relationship with the

Lord Jesus Christ what we are doing this morning and you see these elements up here you see the the bread and the cup what we're doing is we call the Lord's table or communion love feast is another term that the scripture uses and and I as I was praying earlier in the week last week actually thinking about the particulars of what we're going to look at this morning I thought it'd be appropriate for us to kind of take some time and and allow the scriptures to inform us remind us again of what we're doing there's a lot of different opinions about what happens in communion some people have the idea that taking communion is something that in some senses makes or breaks their relationship with Christ I remember talking with an individual who said to me boy I I'm I'm feeling a little uncertain about my spiritual state not well that's a curious thing to say to a pastor and so a natural and logical why is that well I haven't taken communion I

I want to tell you something taking communion doesn't make you better or make you worse there's nothing in the act itself necessarily that has a saving effect it's not like when you die you get to say to Jesus well I get to come in because I took communion yesterday on the other hand there are some who believe that that communion is something that is something we shouldn't celebrate all the time after all when you celebrate something regularly guess what happens becomes too familiar I I don't buy into that and I'll get that point in a minute but but I want you to understand when we think about what we do when we come to this table the best way to figure out what's actually taking place is to do what is to open the Bible everybody said that well that's what we're expecting pastor we really want to look at scriptures and see what the Bible has to say so turn in your Bible to first Corinthians chapter 11 and we are going to take a broad look at verses 23 through 34 as we look at the passage we pick up there in verse 23 and I will read the passage till we come to verse 26 it says for I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he'd given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way he also 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 for as often as you drink this bread help me here as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes let's take a minute and pray our father we are desperate for your help we don't want to be so presumptuous that we think the matter of understanding the sweetness of the scripture is something that is left merely to our intellectual apprehension we rely upon the word that you've given us and we rely upon the indwelling Holy Spirit we ask that you would do a work in the hearts of your people this morning that would be something that is memorable affecting and leaves a mark for the days to come that as a result of our attention to the word and as a result of the enabling of the Holy Spirit that we who know Christ would grow to be more like him and would be individuals who in this dark and failing world stand out as lights joyful in the confidence we have in complete forgiveness for all of our sins and the certainty of our eternal destiny!

We ask this in Jesus name Amen! So as we begin our passage we want to recognize that when we take the Lord's table one of the things that we do is that we value reminders at the very beginning look there in verse 26 it says this For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes One of the ongoing questions that that floats around in different circles is how often should you practice the Lord's table?

How often should you have communion? How often should a congregation be involved in taking the bread and the elements? And there are some There are some groups of people that take it every Sunday There are some that take it once a quarter There are some that even take it less than that and I remember in one case asking a group of pastors, so why is it that you celebrate once a quarter?

[6 : 48] And the answer was this a very interesting answer to me a curious one It said well, if you take it too often it becomes familiar I I remember being a little befuddled by that So how is it that taking something less often that you're supposed to do to remind yourself of things?

How is it that that taking it less often becomes more special now? remember to God in the old testament gave explicit commands as to how often the passover was to be celebrated How often did you do that once a year?

There were other specific times in which the nation of israel had particular feast days that had particular focuses When Jesus gave instruction regarding the matter of the lord's table It is very interesting that he did not give to his people at that time any express directions as to how often we're to take it And so when we think about this question recognize that what the text tells us Informs us of his thought how often should we take it?

The answer is whenever Whenever you choose in our fellowship. We have broken that down and there's no arbitrary Kind of mandate necessarily, but the rule of matter is that we generally take it about once a month Any of you that pay careful attention and I wouldn't give you extra points if you do But if you pay careful attention you notice that we generally do it about once a month We don't do it always on the same day. Sometimes we do it sunday morning Sometimes we do it sunday night sometime we do it wednesday sometime we do it sunday school and the reason for the variety in part Is to provide a little bit of diversity to kind of make you think in different frames and kind of challenge you Outside the space of well today is communion. I got turned my brain off. I know what we do pastor's going to go to first corinthians 11 again You know, it's like we've been there I want you to understand that we value reminders

And we value the fact that scripture tells us that we can do this whenever so That being said remembering our lord's death for our sins is an important part of our relationship and that's what we're doing this morning We're reminding ourselves that jesus died in our place To those who would say well Here we are doing the same thing again And I think probably that uh Repetition has kind of dulled my sensibility I would encourage you to recognize that it's not repetition that is at the heart of your spiritual struggle The fact that you find a lack of affection at the moment is reflective of where your relationship is Not of the regularity with which you do it Case in point I I tell judith my bride of 44 years

[9 : 55] That I love her All the time It's not like I tell her once a week or once a quarter or once a month and uh, she should suffice with that Not only do I tell her every evening when we go to bed the last thing I say is judith I love you and she if she has not dozed off because I dawdled getting to bed She will say and then and by the way when I get there and she's dozed off I There are extra noises that go along with kind of waking her up for it Say I love you too, you know There's nothing wrong, right?

Here's the deal My affection for my bride means that I tell her I love her often And there's nothing lost In the regularity and so I want you to understand That when you come to this table and you remind yourself of the love of the lord jesus for you Do not think that that here we go doing this again It's a little bit like saying I love you to the most important person in the world and there's benefit in doing it The elements certainly make his love clear And our love is stirred in response and I trust that as you walk away from here this morning Having taken the bread and taken the cup that one of the things that is very clear in your heart is this Jesus loves me and that will never never change Let me tell you something I cannot think Of many Spiritual truths That are more important than that to the believer Let me say it slowly I cannot think

Of hardly any other spiritual truth for the believer that is more important than comprehending the unbelievable love of christ for you And so when you take that bread and you take that cup one of the things that I want you to say in your heart this morning is Jesus loves me I understand being amazed that he does I'm when I stop and think about me I just can't get over it He loves me And this morning the elements certainly make his love clear There's another thing that happens when we take communion we value the gospel We value the gospel The bread and the cup are Something to be understood In relationship to what the gospel actually is The fact Is here In physical Manifestation and evidence And so when we take the bread

Jesus died for me And we take the cup He made a new How many of you understand what the word covenant means It means promise He made another promise By the way What was the first promise God made?

Does anybody know? How many of you How many of you know what the old promise or the old covenant was? The first promise that was made He made it to Israel And he said this You keep my law And I will do thus and so How did that go for Israel?

[13 : 02] What's the answer? They did real well didn't they? It's like when I bump into people and I say Why are you getting to heaven? And they say well I've kept the ten commandments I think really? I've never met anybody Anybody Other than Jesus That keeps the ten commandments right?

They're just kind of brain dead when they make that statement The fact is is the old covenant The old promise wasn't kept And God says I will make a new covenant I will make a new promise with you And that promise in essence in Jeremiah is this I will be your people and you will be I will be your God and you will be my people Can we stop doing this little inversion thing Tim?

Let's get over that one I will be your God You will be my people I will put my law in your heart God says I'm going to do this work of conversion And this work of grace And you're going to be a different person than you used to be By virtue of my power And so when we take the elements We are engaged in reminding ourselves of the truth of the gospel And I want you to think about that Now let's understand that the gospel isn't something that is just for unbelievers Is the gospel needed for unbelievers?

Absolutely And by the way Everybody smile so you understand this You can't have the gospel without first of all bringing people to grips with bad news What is the bad news?

All men are pretty good They're going to make it somehow or another And all the paths just get there anyway How's that? If that is the news There's no need for Jesus Do you understand that?

[14 : 43] The bad news is that all men are sinners And stand justly condemned before a holy God And as the scripture says in Romans chapter 3 verse 10 There is none righteous No not one There's not a single person who will be able to stand before God The holy judge and say Hey aren't you glad I showed up because I'm good?

No None righteous No not one And the gospel is something that is not only for the unbeliever But is something that the believer should wrap his heart around every single day When you think about the gospel I want you to turn over in your Bible You're in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 Just kind of skip to the back of the book Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 And we find there in verse 3 and 4 That the apostle gets on the roll About the subject of the resurrection But the frame in which he starts is the gospel Now let's look at verse 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance Do you know what he's saying?

This is the most important thing This is the most important thing So let's try this so we understand the comparison You can go theoretically about three weeks without food Three days without water And three minutes without oxygen So what we would say is that oxygen is of what?

First importance Get your hands around this The gospel remains supremely important for the believer And it is something that we ought to refresh our heart with On a regular basis What is the gospel?

I want you to recognize there in the passage It says that Jesus died for our sins What does that mean? Well for one thing it means that I was a sinner And Jesus died in my place I love that fact Because what it tells me is that God sent his son the Lord Jesus Christ To pay the penalty for my sins And Jesus died to satisfy the debt And the judgment of God against me While it is true That jealousy Lying A brutal foreign power All of these things were really wrapped up And the issue of what was going on in the world That Jesus came into The fact of the matter is Is that that's not why Jesus came To deliver the people of Israel From a foreign invading and occupying force He came to deliver people from the burden of their sin And to help them find victory Over the battle that they had With what was going on inside

[17 : 24] And I want you to understand When you take the bread And you take the cup One of the things that I trust you are saying Is that Jesus died in my place He died my death He has satisfied the judgment of God Against my sin And as Romans chapter 8 verse 1 says There is now therefore What?

No condemnation to them Who are in Jesus Christ Christ Jesus We look at the passage And we also understand this It says that he was He was buried That he was raised On the third day In accordance with scripture So what is the significance Of his death Burial and resurrection By the way Next Sunday morning We are going to go Wall to wall With that truth That is going to be the center Of the message Of the resurrection Sunday Because next Sunday We celebrate the fact That Jesus is not still In the tomb You can't go to some city Over in the Middle East And find out Well that's where he's buried He's not there And you know what He's coming back again I like that I'd like it to be today And if it's not going to be today I'll settle for tomorrow Right?

But the truth of the matter is Is that Jesus died for my sins And he rose again And the reality of it is His resurrection Makes it clear That my debt Has been satisfied Situation came up Not long ago At a call Tim Have you paid this bill?

Well the truth of the matter is Is if I paid a bill It would be a real surprise My wife takes care of that And so what I did Was I called her up I said Honey I just got a call From somebody in Florida Have you paid this bill?

She says yes She says here Let me pull it up How many of you like electronics? Sometimes She sent me A text With a picture of the canceled check And I thought Woo!

[19 : 35] Ha ha! Called the guy back up I said Well yeah I've got a canceled check here In fact In fact She's got your endorsement On the back See when Jesus rose from the dead It was like Paid in full Right?

Done Settled How do I know That there is complete forgiveness For all of the sin That I've committed? It's because Jesus rose from the dead I get pumped about that And I want you to understand This morning When we take these elements We take this bread And we take this cup We remind ourselves Of what Jesus has done And there shouldn't be a day Pass There shouldn't be a day Pass Without a thought Of the blessing Of what Jesus did Do you follow that?

I won't tell you all Of what I say to Judith at night But I tell her Thank you for marrying me You know It's like I would live in a cave I mean I would live in squalor Do you know what squalor is?

I would live in just An abject misery Were it not for the fact That God in his kindness Gave me the bride That she did Or he did She did Woo!

Let's try He and he only Male Not gender neutral But anyway How many How many mistakes Am I allowed deacons?

[21 : 08] I'm just checking Because I'm getting up there Heaven help me How many of you Are praying for me anyway? You're doing that? You probably ought to start now Because I'm bumping Up against the line here Okay Well back we go The truth of the matter is Is that I live with a thankful spirit For what Jesus has done In giving me the bride That he gave me But let me tell you something That doesn't compare To the blessing Of who I have in Christ And what I have in Christ And it's not only When I come to this table That I should remind myself Of that There's something else That we value Going back to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 We value public testimony I want you to put Your little finger On the word proclaim Okay The word proclaim I've talked about this before But it's a word in the Greek That carries the idea Of public announcement And as I was studying This week I was struck by By doing a little bit Of research In the Greek itself

To understand That it's not just An announcement Kind of a generic announcement But it's an announcement That carries with it The implicit issue Of the value And supremacy Of the gospel itself It's an announcement That by the way In which the word Is used in the Greek It's the idea Of something being announced From a higher place To a lower place And when we announce The gospel We are announcing The glory of Christ Down to our fallen And broken lives And to the world Around us And so there is A sense In which When we take The Lord's table We are We are announcing The supremacy Of Christ And we're announcing The significance And the sufficiency Of the gospel Do you understand that?

I believe Jesus died for me And this is the best news In the world Now listen to me How can you say that And not believe it?

Do you follow that? Let me give you An illustration Just so you follow along I have been To several Graduations Of two of my sons Went into the military And two of my grandsons Have been in the military So far And so I kind of like Military graduations And one of the things That goes with Military graduations Is a lot of flag business How many of you Understand that?

Flag this Flag that And you stand And you sing The national anthem And I'm all into singing I mean how many Figures that out? I mean I like to sing I don't always get The words right But I do sing And I even A judgmental person That I am I'm kind of looking around And I see people They're not singing Well I'm thinking Maybe they're not citizens I mean if you're not a citizen Don't sing the song Yeah Yeah just chewing gum But if you are A citizen And particularly If you're in the military When you're singing When everybody else Is singing the national anthem What do you think They expect from you?

[24 : 30] I mean as the camera Is panning through The audience you know And your CO Is going to be Kind of reading See who's not involved Is like What was the deal with you? You're not into this? So let's come back around When we take communion What we're doing Is actually giving Public testimony To what we believe About Jesus Huh?

You with that? And by the way Don't be a hypocrite Oh I love Jesus He's really important to me Go outside and sit in the car And grumble About somebody else Not good If Jesus Has got a hold Of your heart In here I guarantee you He'll have a hold Of your heart Out there If you're playing A game in here Then all that happens Out there Is just the real thing And the purpose Of coming to this table In part Is to refresh Our consciences With the sweetness Of the one Who has become Our savior And given us Complete forgiveness For all of our sins And helped us To stop being The skunk We used to be And so I want you To bear public testimony You boldly announce That he is the savior To all others He is your savior I would not Be bothered If when you took

The bread And took the cup This morning Some of you Had enough nerve And I know It's going to be Unsettling For some of you I wouldn't be bothered If some of you said Man I love Jesus I'm glad He is my savior And say it Loud enough That someone else Can hear it That would be Textually Probably Within the circle Right Okay Well Here we go Point four We value Self-examination Now you look At the passage And verse 27 Says Whoever therefore Eats the bread Or drinks the cup Of the Lord In an unworthy manner Will be guilty Concerning the body And blood Of the Lord Let a man Examine himself By the way Who should do The examination You come and sit In my office And I say Oh what sins Have you committed Today That's not how It is in the Bible Who does the examination How many of you Understand the language Here it says Let a man

Huh What Examine himself By the way Your heart Bears testimony To what it knows About you I want you to Understand there's Another piece In this It's interesting Also And let's just Take a moment To recognize This That actually Paul Takes 27 28 29 30 And 31 That's five Verses To deal with This matter Of self-examination In comparison To the brevity Of some of the Other parts Of the Lord's Table This business Of self-examination Is actually Pretty important I think it's easy For us to become Insensitive to our Struggle with Indwelling sin We get Comfortable The private Thoughts that we Would have That we'd be Ashamed of Voice Publicly That we live With from day To day And we become Quite Accommodating With those Things You know The unkind And ungodly

Things that You say That you Would never Say in front Of a deacon Or a pastor But you do say in the Safety of Your own Home Or you Say to Your wife With a Surly And sour Spirit Those Things Those are The kind Of things That you Need to Confess And forsake It is in The white Hot light Of the Cross And what The bread And the Cup Tell us About his Death For our Sins That our Sin becomes Supremely Offensive You know We're too Comfortable With sin Agreed Agreed What kind of Sins Did Jesus Die for Hello One bite Of fruit His Sacrifice For sins Reminds Us It reminds Us Of just How offensive Sin is And so Let me Say here

[28 : 57] That self Examination Must also Be spirit Enabled Turn to John 13 Just for A moment John chapter 13 Very interesting Passage It actually Touches On three Different Pieces John chapter 13 We find Jesus Washing The feet Of the Disciples Plural And you'll Remember that Peter said You never Wash in My feet And Jesus Says You know What Yeah The thing That I Want us To focus On here Is that When Jesus Washes The disciples Feet One of The things That he Is indicating Is that In the Life of The believer There is A need For recurring Attention To the Ongoing Struggle We have With indwelling Sin How many Of you Have sinned Today Just a

Couple Of you Okay The way In which We take Care of Sin When it Happens Is we Confess it And forsake It and we Ask him To help Us grow In righteousness Isn't that Right And so When we Come to The table One of The things That we Ought to Do is We ought To call On the Spirit And ask Him To help To help You be Objective And genuinely Repentant so That when you Take these Elements you Take them With the Right Heart Finally We value Togetherness I want you To look at This and We'll close Have the Men come If you Look at 1st Corinthians 11 Verse 33 And 34 Paul makes A very Interesting Statement That On the Face of It Would be A little Confusing Listen to What he Says Here Verse 33 So then My brothers When you Come together To eat Wait for One another How many Have you Ever seen People eating At a Military!

Academy Have you Ever seen That? They sit Down Everything's You know It's like We're We're All Together And how Many of You have Been in A home Where nobody Eats until They pray And then What happens It descends Into bedlam You know But until You pray What?

Paul is Not telling The church At Corinth All right All right Wait till Everybody has A spoon That's loaded And then Do it That's not What he's Saying What he is Saying Is that We are One Body If you Were to Go back Earlier in First Corinthians In verse 21 and 22 You'll see That the Problem The church Had then Was not This matter Of Well you Started five Minutes Before I Did That wasn't The problem They were They were Divided They weren't Together And so This word That is Actually Being used Here Is a Word that You could Probably Better Translate So then My brothers When you Come together To eat Wait for One another Is not The idea It is To receive One another To accept One another Hey There is Nothing That should Be more Unifying To the

Natural Struggle We have With Divided Relationships Than the Reminder Of the Fact that Jesus Is our Savior How many Of you Understand That How many Of you Here Struggle With your Attitudes Towards Other People And some Of them Are in The family Of god Taking The lord's Table Should be Something That draws You Together Because Now that You remind Yourself Of what Jesus Did for You And who He is And how You have Relationship With other People Because of The cross You're drawn Together I remember I remember Saying to my Bride Judith The other Day We were Working Through a Family Dynamic And I Have a Brother and A sister That are Not saved And as a Result of That we Have some Interesting Moments Hello And I

[33 : 22] Remember Saying to Her Well Honey We have To work At that Because we're Family I am Family With my Brother and Sister Biologically I am Family With some Of you By divine Appointment And the Blood of Christ Do you Understand That I am Your Brother And you Are my Sister You are My Brother And when I take Communion One of the Things that Jesus wants Me to Remember Is the Fact that We are Family Because of Jesus Okay I'm going to Ask the Men to Come And John One of the Things that We have Enjoyed In the Past Is Singing Together And I'm

Going to Have John Lead us I want Pastors All on the Inside This time Thank you Sing together Behold The Lamb Who bears Our Sins Away Slam For Us And we Remember The promise Made That all Who come In Faith Find Forgiveness At The Cross So We Share In This Bread Of Life And We Drink Of His Sacrifice As A Sign Of

Our Bonds Of Peace Around The Table Of The King Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[38 : 33] Amen. Thank you.

Sing together. In the body of our Savior, Jesus Christ, torn for you, And remember the wounds that heal the death that brings us life, Paid the price to make us one.

And when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you. And I will do this in remembrance of me.

I'm still here with you. I'm still here with you.

I'm still here with you. I'm still here with you. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 35] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. for you.

Drink and remember He drink as cup that only enter in to receive the life of God.

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.

[44 : 44] Jesus, thank you for being my Savior. Let's stand together as we sing the last verse.

And so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond and to remember our soul to follow in the steps of Christ as His body as we share as we share as we share as we share as we share We proclaim And will join In the feast of heaven Around the table of the King