

Communion

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Date: 13 September 2020

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[0 : 00] 10, and all of this is to lead us into the Lord's table. 1 Corinthians 10 verses 1 through to 4 says as follows, for I want you to know brothers that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ. The point here is for us to realize that God's means of supplying his people their needs has always been the Lord Jesus Christ.

It may not have been visibly witnessed as that. The bread and the wine ought to be seen as Christ. We don't believe that they become Christ, but we do believe that God communicates blessing through them in the same way he did in the Old Testament. So we are to learn two things here this morning, that though we participate in physical bread and physical wine, we are actually participating in Christ himself, that God is feeding us with Christ. And we need Christ to live the life that God has called us to live in this world. It's the only person from whom we can get our strength from to really live and stay healthy, spiritually healthy, as well as physically healthy. God is not anti-body. He's not anti-physical or anti-material. You know, sometimes when you enter into Christianity, if you enter into it wrongly, you can become so spiritually that everything material is evil, and it's really not. It's there to be enjoyed, and it is part of God's blessing. But we do participate in these physical material means as a way of setting our hearts and minds on the spiritual reality, which is that God is feeding us with Christ Jesus, that spiritual nourishment.

Well, I would like to pray and now give you a couple of notices before we move on any further. So let's just bring our attention to where we are so far. Father God, we would ask this morning that in each step that we take through this morning's service, through the songs that we hear, through the words that we read in your word, through what we hear you speaking to us, that we would be drawn ever closer to the reality that we are entering into, that we are seated in the heavenlies right now, that while we do not see it with our eyes, we see it in faith, that we participate in the heavenly realm right now, as Ephesians and Hebrews indicate. And again, while we don't see that in physical terms, we know it to be true because your word declares it.

And Father, we recognize this in faith only. So we ask you this morning, Father God, that you would feed us with Christ in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'd like to, the notice, just for time, the only notice I'd like, a familiar passage. And I'll read it to us before we, before we participate in communion.

But if we can turn back for the moment to 1 Corinthians 10, verses 16 and 17. But of course, we'll be needing 1 Corinthians 11 as well, because we'll be referring to from 1.10 through to 1.11.

[3 : 57] So 1 Corinthians 10, verses 16 and 17 says this. So now hear God's word. The cup of blessing that we bless is not, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we partake of the one bread.

What I would like to do this morning is simply draw your attention to the absolute privilege that we have to be able to take communion. I think it's a tragedy when we miss the table and certainly not participate it in any of, you know, I would say the same thing about prayer or the word of God. Any of the means of grace that God gives us when we don't participate in them, it's like going without food, only this is much more important food. It's God has given us, given us them to feed us. And of course, not taking them is like going on a hunger strike for no reason. When Peter received the call for the second time to do what Jesus asked him to do. You remember how Jesus called Peter from being a fisherman, fishing after fish, to collecting men for the kingdom through the means of the gospel, that at the end, after Peter's denial, that he goes back fishing. And everyone says, well, we'll go with you. Peter's a bit of a ringleader. When Jesus calls him aside and asks him, does he love him three times? It is a reminder, of course. But more importantly, Jesus says, feed my sheep.

What was

Peter to feed the sheep with? Jesus tells this young disciple, who is to go out after Jesus to proclaim the gospel and to feed his people. Well, okay, what was he to feed them with? And the answer is, of course, is, of course, is, of course, the word of God in prayer. And of course, this table. This is really, really important. God gave us this table. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us this table to remember him. And this is because we think that we would never forget him. But remembering is an active act rather than simply a capacity of your memory. To remember is to participate rather than simply to recall something to mind. And that is what God is encouraging us to do here. The early church, when they participated together in Acts 2.42, they participated in the word of God and fellowship in prayer. And of course, the breaking of bread. And they did this in faith and obedience because that is the only way to participate in what God has given us. We have to hear the word in faith. We have to participate in prayer, in faith and obedience, and the Lord's table. There is no way of participating in them that honors God unless it is through faith and obedience to God. This is the means and the gifts that God has given us. Now, the temptation, of course, as we have seen in Colossians and over time in the church, is to move away from the patterns that God has given us. This could be because we have become dissatisfied with the scriptural patterns, either through not being taught them. There is a lack of understanding on the part of God's people throughout the generations. And so what was practiced every week in the early church is now not practiced every week? You know, and there's, that cannot be seen as an improvement. That somehow the church is much more advanced now when we are not reflecting what the early church looked like, participating in the word, in prayer, and in the Lord's table weekly. I don't see that we've improved from that in any way. And I think that that is somehow, in many ways, even reflective in Christianity itself. So I want us to come to this table remembering that the sheer gift that we have received from God, it is given so that we would actively remember Jesus through participation.

That we would actively remember what Jesus Christ has accomplished through our participation. This is his body. This is his blood. We are called upon to remember what Jesus Christ has done for us.

[8 : 59] And we're called upon to remember it in wisdom and trust, rather than just simply belief. It is possible to believe the right things. But wisdom is the application of what you believe. Wisdom, to live in wisdom and trust, is what you do with what you believe. Christian living, in other words. And so God has given us this table to participate in trusting him with wisdom, that we do it in the right way, the way that God would have us participate, so that we would be blessed by God.

The Lord's table is God's way of reminding God's people never to forget what Christ has accomplished for them. Now this isn't just to remember Christ, it is to remember what Christ has accomplished for you. In other words, Christ didn't do it for no reason that you simply remember, he did it for you.

And the only way to really appreciate the cross, the only way to really appreciate the resurrection, and to really appreciate the table that we're about to participate in, is to understand it in the context that what Jesus did, he did it for you. For you. He has served you in this marvelous and amazing way that your iniquities are gone, your transgressions are gone, your debts are gone, you are free, flawless people in the eyes of God. You cannot be any more perfect than what you are right now in the eyes of God. And you really must remember that, especially when you have days where you're aware, perhaps, of your flaws and failings. So the Lord's table is a blessing. It is something that you are invited to come. It is something that you are to participate in and be blessed. And of course, when you are missing from the table, you miss that blessing. So your absence means that there is a missing part of your life and that God has not been able to communicate these graces to you because this is where he communicates them. Now the table, it has a warning to it. You don't see it on the front of the table, but God's grace can always take care of itself. Titus 2, that the grace of God teaches us to say no to sin. And therefore, as you're invited to participate in the table, you do so knowing that this is a blessed place, but a dangerous place. And the blessing is, of course, that you will receive

God's feeding, nourishment, spiritual blessing through the means that he has given you. But of course, if you partake of it incorrectly, then you eat judgment upon yourself. And Paul says to the church at Corinth, this is why some of you have even died. It is a place of great blessing, but it is a place of danger. God is protecting his table, even though it's a table of grace, but he protects it so that as we participate in it, we participate in it correctly. And the reason we exhort you to understand

that, to understand what God is saying, is because I don't want any of you to die.

I want you to be blessed and nourished and fed. I don't want you to come under judgment as you come to the table. So the warning is not, oh, here's, why do we have to have the bad stuff? It's rather an encouragement for you to come carefully, to know that you are coming to a living God, that as you participate, you're participating in something that is protected by God. It is there for you who belong to Christ, but it is a place where God protects it. If the people had judged themselves rightly, then they would not have been judged by God, is what Paul was saying.

[13:06] So God protects his means of grace. He protects his word. He protects prayer. He protects the Lord's table. We don't need to stick up for them in the world. God protects them, and God protects us.

Now, the background, of course, to coming to the Lord's table, especially in Corinth, was a reminder that you cannot have a seat at both tables. You must decide at whose table you're going to sit.

If your life is full of idolatry, and you're going after the world seeking fullness and freedom, other than God, then you do not have a seat at the Lord's table. You cannot partake in the Lord's table and the table of demons, is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10. You cannot participate in both. And therefore, we come to the table as wholly devoted people, forsaking the world. We don't want that. We enter into a place of self-denial, saying, I will not fill myself on that food out there, those idols out there, those means out there that help me to feel a better person. I will feed myself on the place, in the place, that can really nourish me, that can really feed my soul.

And so you have a place at this table precisely because it has been bought for you. It's a very expensive ticket to eat at this table, but the price has been paid in the Lord Jesus Christ. But again, the warning is, choose your table. Be wholly devoted to God and forsake all other tables. Now, as we come to the Lord's table, you belong at this table because you're a believer. You belong because you haven't just repented once, but you live a life of repentance. You acknowledge that sin can creep up almost every day, if not every day, and you repent every day because repenting once never makes you a Christian. God's grace makes you a Christian. The life of repentance and faith is something that we practice every day to keep ourselves close and clean as we walk with God. And so this table raises a slightly different question, and that is that our relationship with God directly impacts or a relationship with each other, that as we participate, we participate with other people who

[15:38] God has done the same for. So as we eat of the bread, we eat of the bread as one body, as we read. As we drink of the cup, we drink of it as one body. That this is not, though we participated as individuals, this is not meant to be seen as an individual exercise. It is something that we do together so that we may be blessed together by God. So you are welcomed around this table as someone who loves God, believes in Christ, lives in wisdom and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that your participation has been bought for you.

You are brought by the very means of grace that allows you to sit down at this table. And as you take of the bread and as you take of the wine, you're remembering. But now you recognize that your remembering is not simply calling something to mind, you're actively remembering. You're taking bread, you're taking wine, you're participating in something that God has given you. You are remembering the past, but you're remembering the future also. You proclaim his death until he comes, and he hasn't come yet. And so we keep taking this meal because God is nourishing us and reminding us that there is more yet to happen. You are a blessed people, a people that deserve to be at this table because Christ has paid the price. You have a right to be here because the right has been bought for you, paid for you by the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when the church meets together like we are meeting together now, even under these strange times, we are making the invisible visible, which may be hard to see, and you can only see it by faith in and through the word of God. Ephesians 2.6 says this, that God raised us up with him and seated us, present tense, seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Meaning that as we participate down here, there is a spiritual dimension that we can appreciate in faith that is also participating at the same time. That this is a spiritual reality as much as it is a spiritual necessity. That as we meet together around this table visibly, there is a spiritual reality that is happening at the same time. We are making the invisible visible here. And that while we may not see that we are surrounded by these heavenly hosts, nevertheless, it is the case that that is the case. That we are blessed as we participate. There is no barrier to God communicating his blessing and his benefits to his people at this table. No barrier whatsoever.

We have left all other tables alone. We have left them and let others eat at them, but not us. And so reading this morning taken from Psalm 103 was an apt reminder. The call to worship and our response is a reminder of exactly what God has done for you. The psalmist instructs you to forget not all of God's benefits, benefits that you receive in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he goes on to explain what those benefits are. And of course, remembering Jesus, remembering his accomplishment, is to remember everything else that comes with that. So you're never just remembering one thing independently. The moment you remember Jesus and what he accomplished, you end up remembering everything else that comes with that. And so the question that the table is asking is this, why are you here?

And your answer is simply this, to remember. I am here to remember. I'm here to remember all that God has done for me in Christ Jesus. And as I remember, God nourishes me with his grace. And so what are these benefits that we remember? Well, Psalm 103 says that God forgives all your iniquity. He heals all your iniquity. He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit. He shows you steadfast love and mercy. He supplies us with all that is good. This is what you are remembering as you remember what Christ has accomplished for you. You are a people who have been bought with a price.

[20 : 34] You are not your own. You are the property, the belonging of God. And that's not a negative thing in any way. It's a blessing beyond all measure. We are not our own, but we belong. And we belong because someone has taken those steps necessary to make us their own, to purchase us, to redeem us, to rescue us, to go down deep and bring us up, to clean us with his blood, to make us right before God. And of course, the more we understand about how far and deep away we were, away from God we were, the more we will appreciate exactly what Christ has done to bring us to God. His accomplishment means so much more the deeper and wider you go down into it. So never consider that belonging to God or being bought with a price is a hindrance. It's the very thing that frees you. It's the very thing that brings you to God and keeps you as his people. So as we come to the table, we need to remember these lessons of old and these new lessons or the lessons of the New Testament. And in many ways, they are the same thing. That God's people of old ate and drank and what kept them going through the wilderness was

Christ Jesus. That they may not have seen that in the bread that was sent from heaven. They may not have understood that fully. But Paul says, no, it really was Christ feeding his people. And so God isn't doing something different here. He's doing what he always does. Now we participate at the table because of its relevance to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're still participating in food. We're still participating in drink. These blessings that God has in the material world is connected to the blessings that we receive through the spiritual means. That God doesn't make these distinctions between the spiritual, the secret and the sacred and all of that. Everything is and used by God to bless his people here. Now it does say that God was not pleased with most of them in the wilderness. And this is because that after a short period of time, that not only did they desire to be back in Egypt, which was a very strange thing to desire, they desired to be sat by pots of meat. But as you know, that when Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments, the law of God, they were constructing an idol. They had went wayward very quickly. But God, nonetheless, always faithful, is providing a way for his people to stay close and clean to him. But the danger was this, that the people of God in the past, and therefore is a warning for us today, became overly concerned with the physical and didn't appreciate the spiritual means by which that they were receiving through physical elements. And therefore, they preferred these meat pots, which they never ate, by the way, back in Egypt. It was a figment of their imagination.

The old days were the best. Okay. Wow, it couldn't have been that great, because look at where we are now. And that's the kind of attitude. So what are we to make of this?

[24 : 17] Well, the danger is this, that even God's people today can be overly concerned with the physical, and perhaps, especially now, especially now with this virus and with everything that is going on.

And the warning is this, don't. Don't be so overly concerned with the physical. You know, sometimes when people say, I'm putting on weight, must go to the gym, or how you're feeling, we go straight to the physical.

We've got a hospital appointment, again, physical. We're almost pre-programmed to think about the physical so much that we can take our eye off the ball of the spiritual reality.

And that is that we need to be fed spiritually as well. And so though we come to the table eating physical bread and drinking physical wine, that what we're participating in through these physical means is something very spiritual, that we are being fed by Christ.

And that's not to say that the physical doesn't matter. It's simply to say that don't neglect your spiritual need, simply by taking care of your physical need, which you often are more aware of.

[25 : 35] As you come to the table, recognize that God has given it for your spiritual well-being, as well as your well-being as a whole person.

So as you come to this table, know this, that Christ supplies all your needs, that God gives you his grace, and that as you eat of the bread and drink of the wine, that God is nourishing you, that God is feeding you, just like he did with his people of old.

He is feeding you with something that can give you life, that man shall not live by physical bread with just a physical reality alone, but he shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

We are not designed to live purely on material blessings. We are designed to live with the accompaniment of these spiritual realities as well, without neglecting the physical, but we are never to neglect the spiritual.

And this is what God is teaching us. So come. Here's the exhortation. Come to the table. Come to the table where you belong. It is not a place where any person can participate.

[26 : 48] It is a place where you can participate, because Christ has paid the price for you to sit here, for you to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. As you remember his life, his death, his resurrection, and of course, his return.

This is a means of grace. This is the place, as this word is, as our prayers were, is the very place where God has decided to communicate his grace to his people until he comes.

Amen. Amen. So as we come to the Lord's table this morning, I'll read to you the words that have been left for us, or given to us.

And then, if you would like to come, starting with Ian and Celia here, and then Sophie and Jean, and then we'll go that way and alter all the way back, please.

Those at the front first, and then those at the back at last. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

[28 : 15] Do this in remembrance of me. 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.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself, and then let him so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Well, let me pray for both the cup and the bread at the same time, and then we will eat and drink together in a moment. Gracious God and Father, we remember what you have given us in Christ Jesus, a body that hung on a cross and blood that flowed.

And we recognize, Father God, that Christ served us physically in a physical body, becoming the sacrifice that redeemed men and women, boys and girls.

[29 : 31] And so, Father God, we recognize that as we eat of this bread and as we drink of this cup, that that is what we are remembering. That there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.

and Christ's blood was shed, washing away our sins and our iniquities are found no more.

Father God, we recognize that we are a privileged people because of what Christ has accomplished. So, Father, as we eat of this bread and we drink of this cup, we remember Christ. We participate in this way until he comes. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[31 : 06] Amen. Amen. Amen. So I'm going to reduce this person fueling Father and on, and just put the barrier down laden today.

This satisc was soafar with the world and he put all the secure in this area here.