

The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective: An Invitation to Confession

I Corinthians 11:17-34

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October 30, 2011 – Evening Sermon

The reading of God's Word is from I Corinthians 11 as we come to prayer and the Lord's Supper for this study. I Corinthians 11:17-34 says

[17] But in the following instructions I do not command you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] 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." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. [27] 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. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. [33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—[34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come. The

grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached to you.

In 1983 I was given the extraordinary privilege to extend the Briarwood ministry to Charlotte, North Carolina. We went there to kind of re-plant a church and to move into ministry there. The Lord blessed in some extraordinary ways and He brought some interesting people into that congregation. One of those interesting people was a couple I used to play football against. He was one of those guys who would get into the local paper every week and was very famous. I always felt a little intimidated but thankfully I wasn't playing football on Sunday, I was preaching so the Lord allowed me to minister to him. I got to be good friends with him.

The Lord had moved in our congregation in a very special way one Sunday and he came up to me that Sunday. We were just weeks out of the modular unit and meeting in a metal gymnasium. He said to me, "Pastor do Presbyterians have revival services?" I said, "Well, we need to." He said "I think we need revival services." I agreed with him. I believe there's a place for it if I could just send you back behind that extraordinary confession of sin that we studied this morning in Nehemiah 9. It was three and a half weeks of being in the Word of God, from the first day until the 21st day. That's what brought them to repentance. So I do know we can't bring revival. Only the Lord can bring revival but we can preach for it. We can pray for it. We can ask God for it. We can call upon the Lord to grant it and God's people to seek that reviving Spirit of the Lord. So I believe there is a place for such protracted meetings.

I want to give you another thing to add to that. I was reading a book on the revivals in Scotland. Most of my heritage is from Scotland and if there's any group of people that needed revival it was the Celtic people. They would regularly put that stiff shoulder against the Lord. They would regularly stiffen their neck against the Lord. God was gracious to bring revival after revival and it was really amazing. I picked up this book that did a study of the Scottish revivals and something began to catch my attention. As I went through the various revivals I noticed something. I kept noticing that all of the revivals kept breaking out on Thursday nights. I began to wonder why the revivals were coming on Thursday night.

I read further and the church of Scotland in the 1600s through the 1900s had a practice that is pretty much given up on today. The regular practice was to have communion and have a week of meetings prior to communion. They would literally come from all over the parishes and around the cities. The Presbytery would come together and one or a couple of the preachers would preach and they would have morning and evening services. There was one that was mandatory. They would have open air preaching and people would literally stay in houses and camp out for the entire week as they were moving toward that Lord's Day communion service.

One service that you had to be at was the Wednesday night service for it would be the service of preparation where you would examine yourself. They would do more than examine themselves. The elders would examine you after that service and talk to you about your walk with the Lord, not because only perfect people could come to the Table but only those who would come worthy. Worthy isn't saying "I'm such a great Christian so I can come to the Table." What did the text say? The Table is there for us to come together for the better. How can I come together for the better if I'm great already? Clearly the Table is for sinners saved by grace.

So what does it mean to be worthy? It means that you have come with a focus upon Christ, with a hatred of your sin and with a desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The elders would sit down and talk with you. Upon that conversation they then would hand you a token and you would have to bring that token to come to the Lord's Supper on that Lord's Day. What would happen? In those services of preaching and the gather with the elders there would be a period of confession of sin that would lead to the sweetness of repentance. Out of those Thursday mornings when they would awake would be the freshness of God's grace that was sweeter than the dew that was falling upon the ground in the morning. The congregations and the peoples that were assembled would come before the Lord.

I want to circle back to my conversation with my football hero. I said to him, "I do believe protracted meetings would be helpful but I do also know that the Lord knows we need revival and He certainly would applaud protracted meetings in the Word and prayer and worship to prepare and to call for revival but He has already put an instrument in His church that calls us to revival every time that we honor Christ's command to come to His Table."

What does He say to do when we come to the Table? He says to remember Christ, His body and blood that He gave, His body that He bore your sins upon the cross and His blood that He shed so that you could be forgiven. In light of the Gospel message examine yourself. It's not examine yourself and see if you are worthy of the Gospel. The Gospel has been given by Jesus Christ. He has come for you and now that frees you up to be honest. If it's Christ that saves me and redeems me in His victorious death, burial and resurrection that is displayed at this Table through the bread and the fruit of the vine, now I am free to be honest and examine myself. That is the worthy manner; the Gospel given integrity of examining ourselves and confessing our sin before the Lord.

He says "I have given you this that you may proclaim the Gospel until He comes again." This is His divinely designed instrument for the revival of His people. I am not opposed to and I love to participate in protracted meetings that are looking for revival with teaching, preaching and prayer but this is already here. That's why we do not allow the Lord's Supper to be practiced without a teaching elder

present. It's not because the teaching elder is superior. It's because we don't allow the Lord's Supper without the preaching of God's Word first for you come to partake to be refreshed by feasting upon the Lord spiritually. These elements don't change into His body and blood but you are partaking spiritually of His body and blood. Why? How? It is by faith. How do you have faith? Faith comes by hearing the Word.

So very briefly I would call you from the text to first remember our predecessors in the Old Testament had a meal to. What was the meal that they had? It was called the Passover. They did the same thing. They were to remember. They were to repent and they were to get back to the Good News. Remember the strong hand of the Lord that delivered you from your bondage. Clean out the leaven. What does leaven represent? It represents sin. Clean out the sin. Clean out the leaven of sin in your life, home and family. Then come to the slain Lamb and rise up and follow Him.

We have no Lamb to slay tonight. We have no blood to shed here tonight. We have the bread and the wine that point back to our Lamb, Christ. He has shed His blood and worthy is that Lamb. So I invite you to take that first step, personal, family and by God's grace into our church – revival. It begins with that Gospel gift of integrity. Examine yourself and may the Lord grant us hearts that rejoice for we have a glorious Savior. Our elders may prepare the Table. Spend some time in personal prayer and confession. I will walk you through a little bit of that time and then we'll partake of the Table together. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time we could be together in Your Word and partake at Your Table. We are in desperate need of revival. Revive our church O Lord, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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