

## **Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare – The Sacraments**

**I Corinthians 11:17-34**

**By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)**

*January 29, 2012 – Morning Sermon*

We are in I Corinthians 11. This is a lengthy passage. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. I Corinthians 11:17-34 says

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend 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. [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

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

We have an economy of moments here to come to the Table. As we are coming to the Table there are a couple of things I want to mention. First of all, as we were reading the Old Covenant renewal meal (Exodus 12:1-14), the Passover, the last verse said this was an everlasting meal, a memorial for all of your generations forever, yet we don't do it. Why? It is because that meal is a forever meal because it is forever fulfilled in Christ who takes away the leaven of our sin and who is the Lamb and that by His death we have life. He is the worthy Passover Lamb. Now that bloody sacrificing meal is now replaced by this bloodless meal. The one in the Old Testament pointed to Christ and the one in the New Testament points back to Christ and we now have come to the New Covenant meal that pulls together all of the feasts of the Old Testament in general, (Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Booths, the unleavened bread apart of the Feast of the Passover) and now we have this one simple meal that is unbelievably nourishing, not because of the amount of the food but because of the One whom we feast upon when we come to it by faith, Jesus Christ.

When I was reading I tried to do it in a way that would emphasize a couple of phrases in there for your consideration. The phrase “when you come together” was repeated five times so in other words the Lord's Supper isn't something you do privately periodically for a pick me up experience among individuals. It is an ordinance given to the church, a sign and seal of the New Covenant, a sacrament that is a means of grace under the direction of the elders of the church so that we come together in worship and it is an assembled gathering. That's why even if you're shut in and we bring the Lord's Supper to you we bring some of God's people to make it an assembly of worship. It is a come together moment as we come to the Table knowing that the Lord comes to meet us together at the Table.

Also I paused at a statement, “you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” It is in I Corinthians 11:26 and it’s a phrase that many just kind of walk through but I think it’s something extremely important and I’ll tell you why in just a moment. The third thing I tried to emphasize is that you come to the Lord’s Table in “a manner worthy” and not to come in an unworthy manner. Because some had come in an unworthy manner they judgment of God, not the judgment that falls upon the world of condemnation, but the redemptive judgment of disciplining His people even to the point that some were sick and some had died because they had inappropriately dealt with the Supper that the Lord had set aside for its sacred purpose.

I want to make one observation about the sacrament of Lord’s Supper and baptism. This matter of the Lord’s death is very important because both baptism and the Lord’s Supper point to it. In Romans 6 it tells of the theology of baptism where it signifies the outpouring of God’s blessing because of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of His finished work on the cross we have life and the Lord’s Supper brings us to the Lord’s death, His resurrection, His ascension and His second coming.

The text said “you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” So what does the Table remind us of? Just like baptism does, the Lord’s Supper brings us back to Christ and His work on the cross; His atoning death, His triumphant resurrection, His ascension and His second coming. You might think, where is all that in that phrase? He died on the cross for our sins (His death). “Until He comes” – how can He come if He’s not risen and ascended? Therefore He is coming again. He has risen and ascended and therefore coming again. So where we are brought in the sacraments in general and the Lord’s Supper in particular is back to the Lord’s death.

Here’s what I want you to see. What is short-hand for the Gospel? In other words, if I was going to say here is the focal point of the Gospel, what is short-hand for the Gospel? Here is what the Apostle Paul said to the same Corinthians back in I Corinthians 1. He said “I came among preaching the Gospel and I preached to you the Word of the cross.” It’s not the word of the manger. The virgin birth was so that Jesus would come and go to the cross. The resurrection is the triumphant statement that the cross was victorious over our sins. The second coming is the consummation of what He won at the cross. The Lord, in the preaching of the Gospel, in the sacraments that visualize the Gospel that display the Gospel, He’s always bringing us back to the cross where the love of God met the holiness of God to save sinners to the glory of God by the grace of God. That is where He keeps bringing us back to.

So when you come to the Table there are three promises that this text makes to you of God’s multi-faceted blessings at the Table. I want to walk through the multi- faceted blessings that God has designed for you who come in Christ in a

manner worthy. The first one is the Lord's Supper is designed to promote the spiritual growth of every believer who comes in a "worthy manner." Clearly this doesn't mean I'm worthy personally. If I was worthy personally of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, then I wouldn't need to come to the Table for the better. Did you notice what I Corinthians 11 said?

When you study the book of I Corinthians 11 through 14 the Apostle Paul is having to deal with all the improprieties in their worship service. The church at Corinth was messed up all over the place. One of the things that kept messing up and that showed where it was messing up was their worship services. So Paul had to deal with spiritual gifts, factions, improper preaching, the improper celebration and observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul said "You come together but I can't commend you when you come together because you don't come together for the better, you come together for the worse, because you come to the Lord's Table in a manner unworthy." If I'm coming to the Table in an unworthy manner and it's for the worse instead of the better, what does that tell me the Table was designed for? It tells me it was designed for the better. By the way, if I'm worthy I don't need to get better. I don't need to grow in grace. So clearly he is not talking about us personally being worthy but he said to come in "a manner worthy."

So when you are in Christ who is worthy (that's the first step in a manner worthy) you commit your life to Christ. I want to make something very clear here. This Table cannot save you. It does not convert anybody but it will confirm God's work of grace in your life if you first come to Christ. The Lord's Table can't save you but the Lord will. Don't go get better and come to Him, just come to Him and put your trust in Him then you can have eternal life because worthy is the Lamb. Just simply pray "Lord, I'm a sinner and I turn from my sins to put my trust in You, the Son of God who died for my sins, who rose and is coming again. I surrender no longer to sin that kills me but to You because You give me life." That's where it begins. Then when you as a believer come to the Table you come in a worthy manner, recognizing its joy and its sacredness, its call and its communication, its communication of what Jesus has done, its call to what Jesus is going to do in and through you. Come in a manner worthy.

That is why we believe it's important. The text doesn't tell us how often to do the Lord's Supper. It just says "as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup." Some churches think this is every week and you certainly have the freedom to do that but in our section of the church, by in large although with some exceptions, the way we deal with the importance of the Lord's Supper is not by including it every Sunday where there is the tendency to just tack it onto the service. But whenever we have the service which is often, ten times a year, we take everything in that service to focus on it and we call you to prepare for it by at least communicating it to you one week before to tell you the Lord's Supper is coming. So with preparation, intentionality and regularity is the way we come to the Table for its importance, even as we have done today.

Secondly, the Lord's Supper is designed to recalibrate every believer who comes in a "worthy manner" to focus upon Christ and the foundation of the cross. It's designed for you growth. I'm a Christian and I'm a preacher, thank the Lord. So it's very easy for me to start making my whole Christian life about my ministry. I can lose Jesus in the ministry. I can lose Jesus in preparing for sermons. As a Christian it's very easy to take those good calls, blessings, responsibilities and relationships that you have in Christ and actually get them ahead of Christ. The Lord's Supper gets you right back to the basics. You proclaim the Lord's death. Fix your eyes on Jesus, *[2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:2 ESV)

You don't want to fix your eyes on some preacher whose feet are made of clay or even a church which is the instrument God uses but it's not the foundation. You want to fix your eyes on Jesus. It wasn't just anybody who went to that cross. It was the Son of God who became fully man and went to the cross to pay for your sins. Then you need to remember your foundation is not how well you are living the Christian life but what Jesus did on the cross. That's your foundation. That doesn't mean we don't want to do well because when I get to heaven I'd like to hear "Well done, good and faithful servant" but I'm not doing that for my foundation. I'm doing that because I have a foundation that is unshakeable and that is the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Right there He was suspended, placarded between heaven and hell and there He paid for my sins to free me from my sins so that I could have everlasting life.

The blood was shed at the cross, not from a lamb, bull or goat but the Lamb of God that takes away my sin and it is there that I'm forgiven. More than that when He paid for my sins He gave to me His righteousness so not only am I forgiven and the gates of hell are shut, but I am now accepted in the beloved because the righteousness of Christ now robes me. I have two wonders I confess; Thy redeeming blood and Thy righteousness. Those two blessings that come from the cross are now mine. *[21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV) I can now come to Him and I need to remind myself that I have life because Jesus drank the cup, the unmixed wrath of God, the cup of judgment to the bottom and now He who took that cup now gives me an unfathomable cup of life that is forevermore. The cup of judgment He drank to give me the cup of blessing, life evermore with Him.

A third promise is the Lord's Supper is designed to provide another instrument for every believer who comes in a "worthy manner" to proclaim the Gospel of Christ until He comes again. That is really exciting! I want to confess this. I'm doing a series called iShare and last week we had to stop to do iCare about the sanctity of life. This week we have the sacraments and what's interesting to me is that Jesus is so committed to evangelism that in the very instruments that He gives to

build up His people He has also built in evangelism, because when His people come to the Table in a manner worthy they proclaim the Word of the cross, the death of Christ. They proclaim the Gospel. You proclaim it to yourself. By the cross I'm saved. We proclaim it to each other. Jesus has loved you and set you free. Come with me and let's go to the Table together.

By the way, because of the cross if I have sinned against you please forgive me. For anyone who would come and ask me for forgiveness, I freely forgive because I've been freely forgiven. So that we who are in Christ together, not only are reconciled to Him but to each other for we are reconciled in Christ to our Lord. The world looks and we not only proclaim the Gospel to ourselves of God's redeeming work but we proclaim the Good News to each other as we come forgiving, loving and being patient with one another in Jesus Christ. Then the world looks and says "There is a people who is not a people. They have become the people of God. There is one Table, one cup, one bread and look they are coming from everywhere, young, old, different colors, different backgrounds, from all kinds of nations but they sit down at one Table." We proclaim the Gospel that we can be right with God, right with one another and any and all who come to Christ can have life evermore. See the Table, it is a living statement to the world. Jesus saves sinners.

How long are we supposed to do this Table? It is until He comes again. We will do this Table until He comes again and we'll proclaim the Gospel until He comes again. That tells you that the Lord's Supper is to be done until He comes again and evangelism is to be done until He comes again. We proclaim the Lord's death, the Gospel until He comes again. So how do I come in a manner worthy?

Here is my life takeaway. We need to come in a manner worthy and that means when the Lord's Supper is called by the elders of the church and we come together your first move is reflection. Take that time to read Scripture and reflect on what Christ has done for you, what He is doing in you and what Christ is calling you to do. Examine yourself. Not only examine yourself but examine and discern the body. What about my relationships in the body of Christ? Take a time of reflection.

Secondly, now that we are reconciled to Christ through the cross in the Lord, make sure you're reconciled with each other. Not like the church at Corinth who divided up even at the Lord's Supper and made fun and mocked one another but we're one in Christ. We remove all offenses and we forgive each other.

Then thirdly, be receptive. Listen to the Lord. When you come to the Supper, when the Word is preached listen to the Lord. When we sing the hymns listen to the Lord. When the music of truth is being sung listen to the Lord. What is He saying? Reflect. Listen. Shut everything else out but listen to Him through His Word sung, preached, and read. Listen to Him.

I grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina and we had an ice house. I don't know if they still exist or not but we had one. It had saw dust all over the place so that you wouldn't slip. There was machinery crushing ice and making ice and everything. For three cents I could get a cup of ice here and walk the rest of the way home from school. I was reading a story about a man who was working in an ice house years ago and he dropped his watch. Everybody looked and looked for it and they couldn't find it. So lunch time came and this one little boy who worked there said to everyone else who worked there "Ya'll go to lunch and I'll get back with you later." Everyone went to lunch and when they came back the boy said "Here's your watch." They said "How did you find it?" He said "When all of you left it got quiet. I shut off all the machinery and it got even more quiet. Then I got quiet and I listened. I laid down in the saw dust until I heard something tick. Then I found the watch."

By the way, that was back when watches used to tick. So just listen. Come to the Table. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Come to the Table. Remember Him. Receive Him. Rejoice in Him. He will call you as to how you should serve Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments that we could come to this Table. We come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Lord of glory. We come to Him who was stricken, smitten and afflicted, not by our sin but by You. You sent Your Son to be stricken, smitten and afflicted by You for us that we might have life. Father, renew us to grow, recalibrate us to fix our eyes on Jesus and the foundation that we have in Christ. Father, may the world hear and see the Gospel as sinners saved by grace come together to the Table – one cup, one bread, Christ our Lord. I pray in Jesus' Name, hallelujah what a Savior, Amen.

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