

Honoring one another in the Lord’s Supper

1. The Lord’s Supper symbolizes our unity and oneness as those who belong to Christ Jesus (17-22)
 - a. 10:14-17 – we are “fellows” (not participate in the manner of helping) in the blood and body of Christ, the expression of our oneness in one fellowship in His blood
 - i. “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”(v17)
 - ii. When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are saying that we all are fellows in Christ Jesus through His atoning work on our behalf
 - iii. We are all one.
 - b. This is why Paul uses such strong scorching language that are without praise and actually claiming that their coming together is worse for them
 - i. In this sense, because they are dishonoring the Lord and dishonoring one another in the Lord’s Supper, it is actually worse that they gather together
 1. They are doing more harm in their false unity, which was actually proclaiming an anti-gospel, then if they had not gathered together at all!!
 2. We must not over-emphasize gathering together for the sake of gathering together, for if we are not centered upon the gospel of the crucified Christ (the Lord’s Supper proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes), and walking in line with that gospel truth (remembering) by honoring others, pouring out our resources for the flourishing of life in others, our gathering is actually harmful (never neutral, but harmful)
 - ii. Also, it is for this mistreatment and inconsistency with the Lord’s Supper that he reserves such strong language
 1. It was not regarding gender roles or factions around teachers, but around the Lord’s Supper that he speaks with such severity
 2. It was the divisions that were occurring at the time of such holy remembrance and what was supposed to be Christ-honoring and other-honoring
 - a. “I hear that there are divisions among you when you come together, and I believe it partly”
 - b. “There must be factions (heresies) among you so that those who are genuine might be recognized”
 - i. God is still sovereign over even these divisions
 - ii. There is a necessity of divisions in the church when there is a departure (heresy) from righteousness (“genuine” is a work related to “righteous”)
 - iii. Even though God uses these divisions to weed out heretics, we are still responsible for Christian unity and the honoring of the other around the Lord’s table
 3. These divisions were based upon not honoring others among them, and thus treating some as though they were less valuable, less significant, and less a part of the loaf
 - a. 20-22
 - b. A 1st-century Corinthian didn’t get Sunday off – there was no weekend for slaves, etc.
 - i. Thus, the Church had to gather when people could get time away: early in the morning or late at night.
 - ii. Yet, what happened was that those who were better off could get away anytime that they pleased and started before the poorer, less powerful, could arrive
 - iii. They brought their nice food and wine and had their fill by the time their poorer brethren came with whatever crust of bread that they could grab from their daily ration
 1. Some went hungry
 2. Another was drunk
 - iv. Thus, all the divisions of society were being reflected in the very moment when Christian unity in the symbol of the Powerful (Christ) giving His all to honor the Other (Us) was being proclaimed

- c. The Lord's Supper is a time for expressing mutual dependency upon God for mercy in Christ Jesus, mutual honor to one another as equally needy and equally blessed by Christ's sacrifice
 - i. It is not a time for filling one's stomach
 - ii. It is not a time for showing one's own grandeur in exquisite tastes
 - iii. It IS a time for calling the slave our brother, the poorer our kin, and those who have nothing the honor of their inheritance in Christ
- c. While we do not have the same kind of meals that the early church had, with full meals and timing issues, we still do sometimes bring with us into this moment the same divisions that exist outside the church
 - i. Let us lay aside the divisions of honor and shame that exist in society when we come into this sacred moment
 - 1. This is to be a moment of examination that we might lay aside our divisiveness, our arrogance, our self-centeredness, for the sake of Christ
 - 2. Let us confess such hypocrisy as we hold the broken body of Christ, broken for sinners like you and me, and taste the grapes which call us to fellowship in His death, which was "for you" that we might do the same for one another
 - ii. Let us honor one another as equal heirs, fellows in one loaf, fellows in the body of Christ, and belonging to God and one another
 - iii. Honor one another

2. The Lord's Supper Calls Us to Action in the Light of Jesus' Death (23-25)

- a. "I passed on to you"
 - i. This is a technical term for rabbinical instruction in the handing down of tradition
 - ii. We stand in a long line of saints gone before us, who all have celebrated the Lord's Supper because of the centrality of the death of Jesus Christ to the formation and the function of the Church
 - 1. The death of Jesus, remembered and of which we live in, is the central anchor of all that the church is and does: He is not an idea, a principle of wisdom, or a notion of inner power
 - 2. It is his historical death which frees us from guilt and shame
 - 3. It is his historical death which heals our emotional wounds and psychological scars
 - 4. His historical death must be the centerpiece of all our works and preaching and gathering
- b. "Do this in remembrance of me."
 - i. Biblical remembrance is a call to action in the light of the covenant
 - 1. Thus, when God "remembers" it is not that he forgot, but that is going to act on the promise that He made
 - 2. We, too, are to act on the promise that he made
 - a. Be one! Honor one another!
 - b. Act on the promise that He made in His death to honor the others by laying down His power in His life
 - c. Remember His other-honoring work in His death and live towards one another in the same way
 - ii. Paul is also emphasizing that this supper is about JESUS, not about us!
 - 1. "the LORD's supper"
 - 2. "MY body" and "MY blood" "in remembrance OF ME"
 - 3. The Corinthians had made this about their honor, their appetites, their pleasure, their recognition, etc.
- c. Jesus insists that we go to the center of the gospel often!
 - i. "In the center of the kingdom of God, you do not find a gargantuan palace inhabited by an unapproachable king. No, in the center of the kingdom of God is a bloody cross, on which hung a broken King, who welcomes us as we are." — Paul David Tripp
 - 1. How can we humiliate our brother who has nothing when we see the depths of my own depravity that brought the Christ from the glories of the Father's side to die in humiliation and wrath and nakedness for me?! For ME!!
 - 2. How can I dishonor my sister and seek my own pleasure if my eyes are fixed upon the body which was broken, abused, given?! The blood that was willingly spilled in savage display of hatred as one who was useless and unloved and cast away outside the gate as rubbish?

- ii. When my eyes are fixed on the crucified Christ, then I cannot bear to dishonor another, for it was my sin which caused such terrible display, and it was only God's mercy which issued its command FOR YOU!
 - 1. Therefore, Jesus commanded that we remember His death often, proclaiming it to each other and to ourselves in tangible testable testimony, because we are weak and ignoble ignorant who forget it.

3. The Lord's Supper is the Sign of God's New Covenant (v25)

- a. "This is my body, which is given for you."
 - i. It was laid down, the powerful for the criminals
 - ii. It was offered up in our place, that we might live
- b. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."
 - i. We have been washed, forgiven, cleansed, adopted, justified, glorified in the death of Christ Jesus
 - ii. It is the promise of life, eternal life, the fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord *because of His death*
- c. It is the new promise *in His blood*, the fulfillment of the Old Covenants given to Eve, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and David, to make all things new
- d. Therefore, there is a cause for great rejoicing in the *promise* (covenant) of God
 - i. God cannot breach His own covenant
 - ii. Since He has promised and provided Christ Jesus' death for our death, life for our life, poured out His Spirit, then He will keep His word!
 - 1. "He who has begun a good work in you will finish it at the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6)

4. The Lord's Supper Preaches (v26)

- a. The word for "proclaim" is the word for "preach"
- b. "For you proclaim the Lord's death as often as you eat and drink it"
 - i. He ransomed you from sin and death by dying in your place
 - ii. I will not praise you if you refuse to die to your own honor and belittle those who have nothing among you in the very rite which is meant to remind you of how Christ gave up His honor for the sake of the undeserving least
 - iii. This is completely hypocritical of the sacrifice which you are to remember in this sacred moment
- c. How can this be if the supper is for the Church?
 - i. The Church needs to hear the preaching of the cross all the time, too!
 - 1. We "forget" and do not act on what God has revealed to be true, and thus must be called to repent and walk in line with the gospel again
 - ii. The Church assumes that those who don't believe in Christ will observe the Church often, including our sacraments and rituals
 - 1. Christianity doesn't exist in the shadows, but in the light
- d. Preach it!
 - i. We remember. We repent. We need the death of Christ Jesus for us.
 - ii. The Cross proclaims both the reality of our sin's ugliness (so we can face our sinfulness and desperation) and God's great grace (so we face into it with hope and not guilt/shame)

5. The Lord's Supper is Temporary and Anticipatory (v26)

- a. We only remember Christ with this rite "until He comes" back.
 - i. In the New Heavens and New Earth, we won't be celebrating this supper
 - ii. We will have a different feast, a wedding feast, a completion of redemption supper
- b. Thus, the Lord's Supper not only remembers the work of Christ historically in the past, but also historically in the future return of the King
 - i. Most Jews celebrate the Passover meal (which the Lord's Supper was derivative) contained the words, "Next year in Jerusalem!" as a part of their hope
 - ii. So Christians, too, can proclaim, "Next year in New Jerusalem!"
 - iii. For our hope is not to remain in this death, in the need of remembrance yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, but rather in that final day when we shall see His face and eat with Him at His table
 - 1. Every participation is done in anticipation of mutual glorification with Him

6. The Lord's Supper Provides an Opportunity for Self-Examination (v27-34)

- a. It is possible to participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy *manner*
 - i. That is, it is not that we are worthy or unworthy
 - 1. Of course we are unworthy! That is why Christ Jesus had to die and the reason for which we must remember God's great grace towards us in Him!
 - 2. "unworthy" is an adverb, not an adjective
 - ii. Rather, it is that we can approach the sacrament in an attitude and lifestyle that is unworthy, which is what the Corinthians were doing
 - 1. Thus, there is a way in which we approach the supper that can be called worthy of the table, worthy of the body and blood of Christ
 - 2. It's not that we are worthy or unworthy, or that we have attained some manner of inherent worthiness, but rather that we can approach in *gratitude, humility, repentance, appreciation, worship*
- b. The unworthy manner in which we can participate in this supper is the manner of arrogant selfishness: dishonoring the other
 - i. How can we come to the supper and say, "I remember His death for my selfishness" when I love my selfishness?
 - ii. How can I say, "I remember that He died to forgive all my hate and pride" when I am loving my pride and hating my brother?
 - iii. That is how we approach the table in an unworthy manner: loving my own honor and my own reputation and my own pleasure more than I am desiring the honor of the one who has less power than me
 - 1. Because that is completely unlike the manner by which Christ Jesus gave His body and His blood
 - 2. So, to approach the table in arrogance is to sin against the body and blood of the Lord
 - a. This is why some have taken ill and died!
 - b. Goodness that is severe! This shows us how severely God takes mutual honor in relationship to the Lord's Supper
 - i. I know that this type of warning frightens us and feels wrong, but it is true
 - 1. It is also important to note that not all illness or death is due to particular sin
 - 2. Yet, in some instances, God's judgment is directly a result of particular sin
 - ii. This is discipline for our good, for our hearts which bring about this judgment with such hypocrisy and light-heartedness towards the Cross of Christ have already distanced themselves from fellowship with Christ Jesus by dishonoring his beloved
- c. So, examine whether or not you truly do remember the significance of His body and His blood which you participate in, in which you fellowship!
 - i. This self-examination is, by necessity, what it means to participate in the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner
 - ii. You cannot logically remember His forgiveness and walk in the sin for which He died: your remembrance is not true remembrance and your eating and drinking is judgment against yourself as a liar

Therefore, the Lord's Supper is an opportunity to honor one another in Christ-like death. That is, to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus who laid down His reputation and honor so that others would gain from His lowliness. He used His strength to make us flourish! Are we approaching our gatherings this way? Are we sharing our goods and resources for the flourishing of one another? Are we seeking one another's honor and glory and joy in the Lord? Are we walking like Christ Jesus: dying to the self-glory and living by the Spirit for the glory of God and for one another, finding in this strange and sacred moment that our joy, too, is found in such self-subjection and other-exalting work?

Christ Jesus is the one who died. Yes, and was raised up again! This is our hope! Not our money, or power, or perfection! Not our morality, or righteousness, or goodness! Christ alone is our hope, and this is what we proclaim when we eat and drink together. He has saved us, not on the basis of any good which we had done, but by His mercy he makes us right with God and includes us in the blessings and promises of God.