2-2-20

1 Corinthians 10:15-17; 11:23-32

It is obvious to us that the Lord’s Supper was very important to Jesus. As He said in Luke 22:15, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” During this Passover meal, Jesus made it a Christian celebration by asking us to remember Him. If this supper is important to Jesus, it ought to be very important to us. It is an holy occasion and we are called to treat it as such. Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there with them. But because of Jesus’ proclamation that the bread and wine were His body and blood, we know that He is present with us in some special way. We must also keep in mind that because of who Jesus is, this ordinance came directly from God Himself.

This doesn’t mean that we worship the bread and the fruit of the vine; in this ceremony we worship Christ. We consider that Almighty God became one of us and took upon Himself the punishment that we deserve. In the man Jesus, God endured His own wrath. How can we but worship a God who loves us that much; and is powerful enough to make this happen. We who have accepted Jesus as Saviour owe Him our eternal lives; it is a small thing for us now to live for Him.

Although the bread and fruit of the vine do not become the physical body and blood of Jesus, the Lord’s Supper is deeply spiritual and real things take place in the spiritual realm. Recall what Jesus said in John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” The elements of the Supper go into our bodies as any other food does; but when we participate in the Supper in the right frame of mind and heart, our spirits are nourished. Our enjoyment of the Lord’s Supper gives us strength and growth by the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to “feed on Christ”. It is the same metaphor as the vine and the branches; Jesus is the vine; we are the branches. Just as branches receive nourishment from the vine they are attached to, we receive spiritual nourishment from Christ.

Because we are physical beings, we have a very hard time considering the spiritual world. We believe it exists because the Bible tells us it exists. God understands our difficulty, so He helps us out. The Lord’s Supper is something physical; it is something we can see, touch, and taste. It is something we can actually go through the motions of taking into our bodies. It is a sign. Many people asked for a sign from God in the Bible. Unfortunately, the request was usually testing God and He would not provide one. But sometimes, when it is of God’s choosing, He will provide a sign. The Lord God has graciously provided a sign for us in the Lord’s Supper. It is a sign that He is present with us; it is a sign that He desires our company and to have fellowship with us; it is a sign that He lives within us and therefore we are a part of each other.

The Lord’s Supper is a beautiful sign of God’s love for us. It reminds us of what He did for our salvation. It shows us how much He wants to have an intimate relationship with us. Sharing a meal is a symbol of friendship; while we must never get too loose with the idea of friendship and forget that He is the all-powerful God of the universe; we can still reverently and submissively call Him friend. He desires to dwell with us and have us dwell with Him.

At the same time, the Lord’s Supper is the sign of the new covenant that was sealed with the physical blood of Jesus. The covenant the Lord offers us is a complete remission of sins and eternal life with Him; in return we accept that free gift by faith in Jesus Christ and accept all the changes that come into our lives by doing so.

As we consider all that is involved with the Lord’s Supper, we should understand more and more that it is not something to be taken lightly. Paul gave a strong warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. He tells us that we ought to examine ourselves to make sure that our hearts and minds are right with the Lord before we partake of this Supper. We are to actually judge ourselves. And if we don’t judge ourselves, we will be judged. It is because of our sin that Jesus had to suffer. We are guilty of causing Jesus to suffer in our place. Every sin that we commit, Jesus has suffered for; even the ones we haven’t committed yet. How sorrowful it would be for us to sin by improperly taking the Lord’s Supper so that part of Jesus’ suffering was brought about by the very Supper He instituted for our good.

God takes these things seriously; He also takes our salvation seriously. Paul tells the Corinthians that they have not been taking the Lord’s Supper seriously and tells them the result. In verse 30 he says, “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.” These people treated the Lord’s Supper poorly and as a result, some of them were weak and some of them were sick and a number of them had died. Now keep in mind that these people were Christians. These were not some heathen pagans who broke into the celebration. These were born again Christians; faithful believers in Jesus Christ; and they did not lose their salvation.

Christians are never given a blank check to do as they please. We can and do come under judgement. Our goal is to become more like our Saviour, Jesus. If we don’t do things right, God will help. With all things we must be careful here. This isn’t the only reason we have problems in our lives. If we are experiencing a difficult time, this is a place to check. Make sure we are treating the Lord’s Supper as the special time that it is. If we are, then we look at other areas in our life; has sin crept in somewhere? If so, we must deal with it by confession and repentance. If we don’t find anything here either, then we simply accept the hard time as something God is allowing for our benefit; or for the good of someone else; or perhaps for His glory.

It is important for us to understand the motive for God’s judgement of Christians. Paul explains it in verse 32, “But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.” We are God’s children and He wants nothing but our good; He is for us; He is not against us. But He is holy and because we are His children, we are called to be holy. Our sanctification is a life-long process. As we live, we become more and more like Jesus. Sometimes we are led astray by sin; when this happens, God will call us back to the straight and narrow. Sometimes, Christians may become stubborn and willful; they will persist in sin in spite of discipline. In this case, out of love, God may call them home before they go too far.

Romans 8:1 tells us, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That is a promise God will keep, even if He has to cut our life short. This is a drastic measure but it is far better than spending eternity in hell with all those who have rejected Christ.

Paul tells us that we can save ourselves all that trouble if we simply examine ourselves, and receive the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner. At the same time, we keep in mind that we are all sinners and this is a supper for sinners. The righteousness we have is actually the righteousness of Jesus imparted to us. He is ultimately the one who makes us worthy to participate.

One aspect of our self-examination is to keep in mind that Jesus asked us to remember Him. When we come to this table, we think of what He went through on our behalf. We also remember His resurrection; that He is currently at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us. We treat this as a holy occasion to worship our Saviour. Remember Nadab and Abihu who brought strange fire to the alter and were consumed. They failed to treat God as holy.

There is another aspect to the Lord’s Supper in which we must examine ourselves. Let’s again consider our verses 16-17 from chapter 10.

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

When we consider the body of Christ, we must keep in mind that we, the universal church, are the body of Christ. The church is not a building, the church is the Christian people; and we are the body of Christ here on earth. This is a spiritual phenomenon. Because we all partake of Christ, He lives in us and we live in Him. We become one in Christ.

Ephesians 4:15-16

[S]peaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Jesus is the head; we the church are the body; each of us as individual members of the church have an important function; just like each part of our own physical bodies. Therefore, we are called to unity with each other. This doesn’t mean that we all agree on every little thing; but it does mean that we work together for the Kingdom of God and that we resolve any divisions as soon as possible.

Taking the Lord’s Supper together is a symbol of our unity; a symbol that we are all one in Christ. So, part of our self-examination is to consider our relationship with the others in the church. Are we working to get along, even with those whose personalities may rub us the wrong way? Are we somehow causing a division among some people in the church? Is there a conflict with another member that we are working to win, instead of working to resolve? In examining ourselves, we consider our thoughts toward others in addition to our thoughts toward Jesus.

The Lord’s Supper is a beautiful gift that Jesus left for us. It is a way to share deeply with Him and with our fellow Christians. It brings about a spiritual bond and spiritual growth. It reminds us of what our Saviour did for us and of His incomprehensible love. When we open the door of our heart to Christ, He and the Father come in and sup with us; and dwell with us. The Lord’s Supper also reminds us of what is coming: The Wedding Supper of the Lamb. A tremendous and joyous feast that we will share with Jesus, when we are with Him forever in eternity.

Prayer

Thank You Lord God, for You know that sometimes we need something to touch or see to help us understand. You provide these things perfectly and according to Your wisdom. You give us Your Holy Spirit so that we have the faith to believe the things we cannot see. Your word and Your Son Jesus help us to understand the spiritual world.

Help us, Holy Spirit, to properly examine ourselves when we partake of the Lord’s Supper. Show us if there is any sin hidden in our hearts. Reveal to us any lack of harmony with our fellow Christians. Keep in our minds that the body and blood of Jesus was truly broken and spilled for us.

We are grateful, Lord Jesus, that You invite us to this table. Because of Your work on the cross, we will always be properly attired in wedding clothes; that is, Your righteousness. Thank You for the unity we share in this Supper with all Your people. We look forward to that wonderful feast day that is approaching when we all share this meal with You in heaven.

In the powerful name of Jesus we pray

Amen