

J. KYLE PAISLEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning Sermon Notes

7th May 2006

Read: 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34

Text: v.v. 23-25

The Lord's Supper

Just as in the OT era the nation of Israel had two ordinances -- namely, Circumcision and the Passover; so in the NT economy the Church has been given two sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which have, as noted, replaced the ordinances of that former administration. The Gospels, in their record of the institution of the Communion ordinance, make it very clear that it was actually during the celebration of the Passover on the night prior to His death that Christ instituted the new sacrament. Matthew tells us that it was “*as they were eating...*” – that is, eating the Passover meal – that Christ introduced and ordained the communion of His body and His blood. Thus, the very fact that He did so at that particular juncture was the indication that the Passover was being abolished and the Lord's Supper was being established as the covenant meal of the NT era.

When the believer reads the words that Christ employed at the institution of the Lord's Supper it will be noted that they are words of explanation. His words are recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and here again by the Apostle Paul; and it is plain from these records that Christ explained carefully the meaning and the sense of this sacred ordinance. His sovereign institution of this ordinance as the Head of the Church was couched in a verbal explanation of what was taking place. He did not leave it to the finite minds of even good & godly men to determine the meaning of this ordinance – He gave the explanation of it even as He introduced it to the Church.

Notice from Paul's record here in 1 Cor 11 the fact of our Lord's personal explanation of this sacrament. What Paul records here, he received directly from the Lord Himself, as v.23 informs us – “*I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ...*” and then follows the details of the institution of the ordinance. Thus, Paul did not receive the details from men who had been present in the upper room when the Lord instituted the sacrament but from the Saviour Himself. The Apostle to the Gentile churches was given the details by direct revelation from Christ so as to stamp the ordinance with His own authority as Head of the Church through His own direct and personal words of explanation.

In the explanation of the Lord's Supper as given by the Saviour there is much detail. For example, in nature the Lord's Supper is a *remembrance*, for it is to be observed in remembrance of Christ. The word “remembrance” signifies a calling to mind, so that as we partake of the ordinance, Christ as revealed in the Scriptures is to be called to mind. The point is that we are to call to mind from the record of the Word, the work that Christ has performed for His people. Christ also explains that the Lord's Supper is a *representation*. He says of the bread – “*this is (or represents) my body...*” and “*this cup is (or represents) the new testament in my blood.*” The reference to the “new testament” or covenant is important for Christ is essentially saying that in the two emblems there is represented to the faith of the believer the fact that the covenant of grace has been confirmed by Christ's death & all of its blessings secured to His people. Thus, Christ in instituting the ordinance also explained its significance.

Consequently, on the basis of what Christ Himself set forth about the ordinance, Paul proceeds to draw a conclusion in v.26: namely, that every time the Church observes the Lord's Supper, Christ's death is proclaimed. The verb *shew* means “to proclaim”. Thus, at each observance of the ordinance there is a fresh proclamation of the death of Christ, meaning that believers should celebrate it with discernment. Notice the words in v.29: “*not discerning the Lord's body.*” Many in the Corinthian church were making no attempt to discern or understand the Lord's Supper at all so that it was of no spiritual benefit to them – it could not be a means of grace to them.

We have been noting that Christ the Head of the Church has appointed certain means of grace for His people; and today we wish to give some time to the Lord's Supper as a means of grace to the Church. The point is that it can only be such by noting what the Lord's Supper proclaims about the death of Christ and how that relates to our own hearts and our own experience.

I. IT IS A PROCLAMATION OF THE SUFFERINGS OF HIS DEATH

That Christ not only died but that He suffered is shown in the communion ordinance. Note the words “*this is my body which is broken for you.*” See Luke 22: 19, “*This is my body which is given for you.*” For Christ's body to be given or broken means that it was given over unto death, which means that it was given over unto suffering. The fact & reality of the sufferings of His death are not only underlined by His words but in the breaking of the bread itself. V.v.23, 24 state that “*He...took bread: And...He brake it.*” He performed the act of breaking bread. Was a symbolic act, thus His words “this is my body, which is broken for you.” Breaking of the bread was symbolic of the sufferings of Christ in His death.

1. **Such sufferings were voluntary.** Note that our text informs us that Christ Himself broke the bread as He instituted the communion ordinance. He did so, not one of the disciples, to bring home to us that He gave Himself willingly & voluntarily. His breaking of the bread could only take place of course at the original institution of the supper. But when the communicant receives the broken bread it is a reminder of the voluntary sufferings of Christ.

At the table keep this in mind – that your Saviour (a) was not coerced into His sufferings John 10: 17, 18; (b) had the Divine prerogative not to suffer Phil. 2: 6-8; (c) gladly & willingly undertook all His suffering Heb 10: 5-7; Matt 26: 30. His act of breaking the bread thus reminds us of His voluntary sufferings.

2. **Such sufferings were vicarious.** V.24, “*this is my body, which is broken for you.*” Here Christ clearly shows that the sufferings of the cross were not for Himself but for His people. The vicarious or substitutionary nature of His

sufferings is underlined by the word “for.” Its sense is *in place of, in stead of.* 2 Cor 5: 20, “*in Christ’s stead.*” Phil v.13, “*that in thy stead.*” So the word “for” certainly proves that His sufferings were vicarious.

Vicarious sufferings of Christ are the highest proof of Divine mercy. Concerning the penalty that is due for sin – the retributive justice of a sin hating God would be satisfied if the entire human race were punished forever. Moreover, if there were no other attribute but retributive justice this is the course that God would have followed – *He would not have allowed, never mind provided, a substitute to satisfy Divine justice.* Note this truth well & remember it as you sit at the Lord’s Table – what mercy to sinners to allow a substitute to suffer Divine retribution in their stead; and still more to provide the substitute. The vicarious work of Christ is the Sovereign Judge putting Himself in the place of the criminal.

3. **Such sufferings were vital.** In handing the disciples *broken bread*, the symbol of His suffering, Christ was surely demonstrating that His suffering was vital to their redemption. Vital or necessary, for there was no other way. See Luke 24: 25, 26, “*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*” The ‘things’ are His sufferings – v.20. Two disciples could not understand why such things had befallen Jesus of Nazareth, thus Christ must convince them that such sufferings were vital. Hence, the verb *ought* in v.26 means *it is necessary*. But Christ then gave them a revelation of Himself as the One Who had suffered by the *breaking of bread*. See v.v. 30, 31. Note that it was the breaking of bread that caused them to recognise Him as Christ. See also v.35. Point is that in the breaking of bread the two disciples were brought to see that it had been necessary for the Messiah to suffer, for without His sufferings there would have been no redemption.

II. IT IS A PROCLAMATION OF THE SACRIFICE OF HIS DEATH

In the two actions of the breaking of the bread & the distribution of the cup it is reiterated that Christ’s death was sacrificial. That His death was sacrificial is stated clearly in much Scripture. The N.T. words for sacrifice denote the idea of *being slaughtered* bringing out the violent nature of the sacrificial death of Christ. See Rev 5: 6, 9, and 12; also Acts 8: 32 containing the quote from Isaiah 53: 7 – “*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.*” Thus, Christ’s death was sacrificial.

Offering of sacrifice is the action of a priest; an integral part of his work, Heb 5: 1; 8: 3. Christ certainly occupied the priestly office as the *Great High Priest*, Heb 4: 14, “*Seeing then that we have a great high priest.*” Thus, He would have offered a sacrifice, & He did -- Heb 10: 12. But the amazing point of Christ’s offering of sacrifice is that *He offered Himself, He was both priest & victim.* Heb 9: 26b.

This very point of Christ offering Himself is so apparent in the institution of the communion ordinance. Christ was present as the Great High Priest, performing the symbolic actions that speak of sacrifice. But note that in His words & actions He revealed that He was also the victim, the sacrifice, as well as the priest. He broke the bread, the symbol of His sufferings. He presented the cup, the symbol of His shed blood. Truly then, in the Lord’s Supper there is a reiteration of the fact of the sacrificial death of Christ.

1. **It is an acceptable sacrifice.** This is brought out in a very interesting fashion in the institution of the ordinance. Note the verb *brake*. In the original Greek the tense denotes that He broke the bread only once. Brings out the thought that the sacrifice of Christ was once & for all because it was accepted by the Father. The Roman mass is such a blasphemy because its supposedly being a sacrifice & being offered repeatedly implies that the Father did not accept Christ’s sacrifice. But the broken bread that you receive reminds you that Christ’s work is done & accepted by the Father. See Eph 5: 2.

2. **It is an atoning sacrifice.** This is presented in the emblem of the cup that contained the juice of the grape. Christ certainly makes it clear that the contents of the cup were symbolic of His blood. But it is important to note that it is actually the shed blood which underlines the atoning nature of the sacrifice of Christ.

Note – in His institution of the ordinance, Christ very deliberately made a distinction between the giving of the bread & the giving of the wine. He did not give both at once. This separation between the giving & reception of the emblems is to bring out the fact of the blood making atonement for sin. Christ suffered throughout His life in many ways in His humiliation. Then He went to the cross & suffered both in body & soul under the wrath of God. But the centrality of that suffering was the shedding of His atoning blood, for the blood atones for sin. Lev 17: 11, “*It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.*” Hence, this is the reason for the emphasis on the blood with regard to every major Gospel doctrine.

III. IT IS A PROCLAMATION OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF HIS DEATH

For the believer’s comfort of faith & consolation of soul, the truth of the sufficiency of Christ’s death is of great importance. By the sufficiency of His death is meant that as a result of Christ’s death *all that is needed to save the soul and fit it for heaven flows from His death, is the fruit of His death.* Christ has died once, but the benefits of His death are endlessly sufficient. This is why the table is to be perpetually observed, not ceasing until He comes again – to bring out the fact of the sufficiency of His death. That is why the believer is to partake of the Lord’s Supper regularly – as a testimony to the sufficiency of the death of Christ for his own soul; that while Christ was sacrificed only once, the benefits of that death meet every spiritual need. See Mark 6: 41 – “*brake*” basically the same word as in our text. But note – Christ broke the loaves only once, but He kept on giving until all were fed. Clear picture of this truth of the sufficiency of His death. Christ died once, but as the Bread of life He keeps on giving of Himself to meet all the needs of His people. What a fulness there is in Christ crucified.