

Remembering the Sacrifice

1 Corinthians 11.17-29

April 8

Jesus instituted two ordinances for His church, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. An ordinance is defined as "a practice established by Jesus Christ with the command that it is to be carried out." Baptism is an initiatory ordinance by which a believer makes public his or her faith commitment to Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is a memorial community meal recalling the sacrifice of Christ.

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? How do believers observe the Lord' Supper?

First, the Lord' Supper is celebrative worship (1 Cor. 11.17-22). Baptist theologian David Dockery wrote, "The highest form of corporate worship is the Lord's Supper." As churches observe the Lord's Supper, the church gathers not as a memorial society to a dead founder of a movement; the church gathers in celebration of a Living Lord. The Lord's Supper, therefore, is not something added to the end of the service of singing, prayers, and preaching; the Lord's Supper is worship.

Jesus functions as the center of the Lord's Supper. The Supper belongs to the Lord. Jesus is the host of the sacred meal. The Lord provided the elements for the Supper, namely, His blood and body. The Lord of the Supper also invites people to the His banquet table.

New Testament terminology for the memorial meal enhance the understanding of the observance as worship. While Baptists prefer the terminology "Lord's Supper," the terms "Eucharist" and "Communion" are biblical terms. Eucharist means "Thanksgiving". Jesus took the bread and cup and gave thanks. Believers enrich the Lord's Supper as they celebrate the blood and body of Jesus with thanksgiving. The term "communion" also points to the Lord's Supper as an act of worship of the people of God. "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10.16). In the Greek New Testament, the word "communion" is koinonia or fellowship. By participation in this memorial meal, we spiritual share in the death of Christ.

The church at Corinth had perverted the fellowship associated with the body and blood of Christ into divisions and schisms.

Second, the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of the cross (1 Cor. 11.23-26). Some denominations, like Quakers, do not observe the ordinances. Jesus commanded, "Do this in remembrance of me." Remembrance is more than recollection. By remembrance, believers reflect backwards on the crucifixion of Jesus and bring the past event into their present experience. In other words, remembrance is an act that makes the crucifixion fresh. Remembrance mans to recall the crucifixion with vividness and power so that it affects the present. Specifically, Jesus commanded believers to remember His body and blood. Jesus voluntarily submitted His for our sanctification (Heb. 10.5-10). His blood inaugurated the new covenant of forgiveness (Heb. 9.22).

Through remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus, believers renew their commitment to Christ, commitment to the church, and commitment to the church's mission as they "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11.26).

Third, the Lord' Supper is an opportunity for examination (1 Cor. 11.23-26). As a pastor, individuals have said to me, "Pastor, I am not going to participate in the Lord's Supper because I am not worthy." In the Greek New Testament, "unworthy" is an adverb rather than adjective. The term describes observing the Supper in an "unworthy manner" rather than an "unworthy person." The truth is not no individual is worthy of the sacrifice of Christ. The *Christian Standard Bible* expresses the meaning well, "...whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor. 11.27). Participating in the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner" occurs in the context of divisions and schisms.

1. With Worship
2. With Remembrance
3. With Examination