



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 11: 17-28

1 Corinthians

"Selfishness at Supper"

TRANSCRIPT

We are continuing our studies in 1 Corinthians. We're in chapter 11, and we come to a new set of problems in our book. Last week, it had to do with head coverings and the abuse of authority that was going on in the church. And now, Paul takes up the subject of the meeting of the church, beginning with verse 17 of chapter 11, and that subject will continue on through chapter 14. And in this section, he deals with various abuses that were taking place in the church. So, we're going to look at verses 17 through 26 this morning.

And Paul writes: "But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worst. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and our time of study in it

together. Let's pray. Father, we give You thanks for this time together on this Lord's day, and that we do pray that You'd bless what we have read to our understanding. Help us to understand the situation that Paul is describing in the church of Corinth, but help us to see how it applies to us in this day and age in which we live. And I pray, Lord, that You would guide us in our thinking to that end. And so, we pray, Lord, that the Spirit of God would minister among us this morning unhindered, and that He would open hearts to receive the truth of this passage and help us to think clearly about it, help us to put aside the details of life and all of the issues that can begin to subtly crowd in our thinking, and help us to focus our attention on this subject. It can be a little complicated, but I pray that the Spirit of God will guide us in our thinking through it and make the proper applications for each one of us, build us up spiritually. This is such an important time for us, Father. We recognize that. It's a time when we come together to worship, as we have done in song, the hymns that we have and will sing, but time also to come before the throne of grace as we're doing now, and praying for ourselves. And a time of focusing upon the Scripture. And it's through that time of study that we are sanctified. We're sanctified by all of this, Lord, but we certainly are affected in the inner-man and our souls through the reading and the teaching of Scripture. And so, we pray that You bless us to that end, that You would correct us and motivate us where we need that. Particularly, as we study this very important subject of the Lord's supper, help us to see the importance of it, and the meaning of it, and the purpose of it. So Father, we commit this time to You, to that end, and pray You'd bless us. And we pray not only for our spiritual concerns and the concerns of this hour, but for the concerns of a material nature or physical concerns that which we have to deal with every day of the week. We pray for our health. We pray You'd bless it. We thank You for those of us who enjoy good health. We give You praise and thanks for that. It's a gift from You. We thank You for it. But those who are in great need, some battling sickness, others surgeries and procedures, we pray that You would give them healing and encouragement in the midst of the affliction and the difficulty. And those who are struggling at work, just from the pressures of life and the difficulty of the economy in which we're living, help them to focus on You and rest in the fact that You are in control. You're in control of this economy. You're in control of the particular issues that trouble us in our life. There is nothing outside of Your sovereign control. That should give us comfort.

Help us to rest in that, to be diligent. Give those who are working and those who are discouraged diligence in what they do, but help them to rest in Your providence, in Your care, and Your sovereignty. Those who are without employment, again, Lord, help them to look to You, and I pray that You would help them and all of us in all the circumstances of life in which we are in. Help us all to see Your hand in our lives and to sense Your presence. We give You thanks again, that we have that assurance that You are involved in our lives at every moment, and You're involved in this hour as well. We know that You're here spiritually, and we pray that we would sense Your presence and that You would bless us. Open our minds to receive the things that we will study and to think clearly. Build us up in the faith and bless us. May everything we do in this hour be to Your honor and glory, and then bless us this evening as we return to this place to remember our Lord and His death for us. Remember His First Coming and His Second Coming. [End of Prayer] We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] One of the great museums of Europe is the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It contains some of the world's finest art. But, its most famous painting is Rembrandt's "Night Watch." It's a colossal painting on canvas of a group of guardsmen going out to patrol the city. It's really a group portrait of some contemporaries of Rembrandt, some 18 figures carrying muskets and lances. As I say, it's one of his most famous paintings. So, in 1975, a man entered the museum and cut a zigzag across it with a bread knife. Occasionally you hear about acts of vandalism like that where people deface great works of art. And when we hear about it, we wonder why anyone would do such a thing. And yet, in the church, people do it and we can even do it whenever we improperly observe the Lord's supper on a Sunday evening.

The supper is really a portrait of Jesus Christ. It is a picture of Him, not of course on canvas, but in bread and wine, which He gave the church as a reminder of who He is, and what He has done for us. But, in Corinth, they were taking it in an unworthy manner by treating it like an ordinary meal and excluding many of the poor people of the church from observing it. They degraded the sanctity of the supper by doing that. They committed an act of vandalism against the portrait that Christ had given them, every bit as much as if they had come and cut a big Z across a masterpiece.

So, Paul corrects them. But in doing that, he gives some of the most important teaching in the New Testament on the Lord's supper. So, first, he exposes the problem. Then, he corrects the problem. And then thirdly, he gives the purpose of the Lord's supper.

But, before we consider all of that, first I want to give a little bit of background on the Lord's supper and its origin. It is one of the two ordinances that the Lord has given the church. The other is, of course, baptism. Both are very instructive about Christ and salvation. Baptism signifies our entrance into the Body of Christ. Once a believer is put in Christ, he or she can never be taken out. Our Lord gives us that assurance. The Scriptures do frequently, but He tells us in John chapter 10 that no one can snatch His sheep from His hand. No one can take us from Him. We are saved once and for all. So, a person is baptized once. We're not saved many times. We're saved once and for all, so we're baptized one time.

The Lord's supper is a bit different. The Lord's supper signifies the person and work of Christ. It recalls our spiritual redemption by His death, and our constant dependence upon Him for spiritual life and nourishment. We're never in a moment where we don't depend completely and totally upon Him. We are saved and sustained by Him. So, we observe it repeatedly to remind ourselves of what He has done for us, and what He is in fact doing for us, and what He will yet do for us. The Lord established it during the Jewish Passover. It was during the meal that Jesus made the bread and wine of the Passover the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. Paul indicated a connection between the Passover and the Lord's supper; and specifically, the Lord Himself, back in chapter 5 and verse 7 where he described Christ as "our Passover." The Passover. Specifically, the Passover lamb, pictures our Lord, prophesied our Lord as our deliverer. The Passover meal itself is a portrait of that. It illustrates Israel's deliverance from slavery when the angel of death passed through Egypt and smote the firstborn in the land.

But, the Lord's mercy was given in the promise to spare the homes with blood on their doors. So, each family sacrificed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts of their houses. And then, they ate the Passover meal of lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. That night, you know, the angel of death passed through Egypt, and the Lord passed over the homes of the Israelites where He saw the blood on the doors, and He spared them. Each lamb that was sacrificed died as a substitute for the firstborn in each home. So, it was the blood of the lamb that saved the

Israelites from judgment.

The Lord instructed the nation to observe the Passover every year so that they would remember that the Lord had brought them out of slavery. Now, it was a slavery of a material kind. It was a slavery that He delivered them from that is of a, as I say, a material kind, but it pictures the spiritual deliverance that Christ obtained for us, through His death as our substitute. So, appropriately, at the Passover meal, the night He was to be betrayed, Jesus transformed the Jewish feast into the Lord's supper where He asked us to remember Him, remember His sacrifice, remember what He has done for us.

Well, the early church originally did that by sharing a common meal. That became known as the Love feast, and involved taking the bread and the wine at the end of the supper. So, they would gather, they would have a meal together, much like the Passover meal. And then at the end of that, take the bread and the wine to remember what the Lord had done, and remember Him.

Now, the church was doing that in Corinth. That was their practice, to share a meal together, have a common meal, when something went wrong, and the feast became a scene of gluttony, and even drunkenness, and a scene in which others were excluded from partaking of it altogether. Paul got word of this in Ephesus where he was when he wrote this book, and he came down very hard on the problem in the last part of chapter 11. He praised them earlier, you remember, in verse 2 of the chapter, for their loyalty to the truth. But, on this next subject of the Lord's supper, he says there's nothing to praise. In fact, everything they were doing, he says, was for the worse. He begins by explaining the problem in verse 18 where he says there were divisions among them.

They weren't divided doctrinally. They were solid, it seems, at least largely, orthodox, on the doctrines of the faith. Paul, as I said, made that clear. He praised them for holding through the traditions which he had taught. But there were divisions socially. There were divisions in terms of finance and money. The rich ate together and the poor ate by themselves. Or, as was often the case, were left out of the meal altogether. Those who were wealthy probably provided most of the food and then ate most of it before the poor people in the church could arrive and have any.

And that defeated the whole purpose, or at least a large part of the purpose of the Lord's supper. Back in chapter 10, Paul spoke of the bread as Christ's body, and said in verse 17, that there is one bread. Now, all of this is symbolic. It all has

significance. And that's very symbolic. The one bread, the one loaf. The church is made up of all kinds of people. It's made up of rich and poor. It's made up, or was in the early church, of slave and free and many of those were slaves in the early church. Male and female. Everywhere we can divide the church, it was divided. It had many different parts. It was diverse. But, we are one in Christ. And our unity is expressed in the one bread that is broken for all. But, the Corinthians weren't behaving as one body, one family. They'd form cliques. They'd form little supper clubs, which denied the unity of the church, and denied the words of love for all. The Lord is for the rich as well as the poor.

Now, all of this came to Paul as a rumor, as a report. That's what he says in verse 18. I hear that divisions exist among you. But he adds that he partially believed it, which means he did believe it. And he explains why in verse 19. It's not altogether clear why, the connection there, but it seems to be that he could understand this from the fact of human nature. He understands human nature, and that there was a purpose, interestingly enough, in all of this. He says things happen and must happen in this way in order to test the character of the people and the church, verse 19. "For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you."

Now, divisions in the church were inevitable, and he's saying that they are inevitable here. They're inevitable, first of all, because of who we are, because of our nature. We're sinners. We're saved sinners, but nevertheless, we're sinners. And we have to deal with that principle of sin, as Paul describes it in Romans 7, "all our lives until we leave this world." So, we're justified at the moment of faith. We're declared righteous. We are forgiven and accepted by God fully and completely forever. And yet, there is sin within us that God must deal with in the process of sanctification. And so, we all have to deal with what we are and who we are. And what we are, very simply, is selfish. And that comes out in the church, and that came out in Corinth.

There were factions. There were self-interests. But, God uses factionalism. He uses divisions. He uses problems in a church to test and purify the church. I'm going to give you an example of that very thing, and in a very surprising statement by our Lord in Matthew 18 verse 7. He said, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come." It's inevitable that there are going to be very big problems in the church, among the people of God. There'll be stumbling blocks there. It's inevitable, He says. "But, woe to that man through whom the stumbling blocks come!" So, these things

will happen. It's the nature of the situation, because of human nature, that there'll be false teachers, that there'll be divisions, there'll be all kinds of problems. He says woe to the person who causes them, but these things are going to happen.

And so too with this situation. God didn't approve of this situation. It was disgraceful. But, He uses it and He uses worldliness and selfishness to test His people, like gold is tested in a furnace for its genuineness. So, in the plan of God, Christ sees like this occur in the church for the purpose of proving the nature of the people. Their purity or their lack of purity. Their maturity or their lack of maturity. Divisions in churches are not good, necessarily. They're not what we desire or should desire, but God uses them to separate the good from the bad, and demonstrate for all to see who the leaders are, who the trustworthy are from their response to those circumstances.

Charles Hodge, the very Presbyterian theologian of the 19th century wrote that there is a consolation to know that when divisions occur, it's not by chance, but it is ordered by providence, the providence of God, for the purpose of purification. And I think that's true, that there's some comfort in knowing that God is going to use it for a good purpose. That's encouraging. That's also sobering, because when these things happen, when these crises occur, when this trouble happens, we have to ask ourselves: are we responding properly? Are we responding well? Are we responding obediently, selflessly, or selfishly?

Many in Corinth were not responding well. In fact, they were the cause of the problem. They were indulging themselves; they were satisfying their appetite at the expense of others, and making a scandal of the Lord's supper. In fact, Paul tells them in verse 20 that what they were doing was so far removed from what Christ intended in the observance that it was no longer the Lord's supper. "You meet together," he says, but it's "not to eat the Lord's supper." Well, they thought they were meeting for the Lord's supper. That's what they came to do. That was their intention. But the reality was: regardless of their intention, the reality was that when they came together, they were doing something else. They weren't eating the Lord's supper. They were eating their own supper. They were thinking only of themselves, he explains in verse 21, "for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk." What a way to remember Christ. What a way to celebrate the salvation that He has obtained for us through His own self-sacrifice.

But, you can, I think, easily imagine how this might've happened. The

wealthy members of the church would arrive on time for the meal, while the poorer members, especially the slaves, and there would have been many slaves in the early church. They would've often times arrived late. They had less control over their schedules. They, in fact, had very little control over their schedules, so they perhaps would finish their work late, or perhaps as they finished their work, their master would give them some extra chore to do, and it would keep them from arriving at the meeting on time. But rather than wait for them, the rich would go ahead with the supper.

So, when the others arrived, there's nothing left. The rich had taken everything. Some were even drunk, leaving the poor members hungry, really, not only hungry but humiliated. It was nothing of a common meal, that is a shared meal. It was in no way the Lord's supper. Didn't reflect the unity of His body. Certainly not the love that Christ has equally for all of the saints, rich and poor alike. It was a complete distortion of the real thing. It was spiritual vandalism.

So, in verse 22, Paul stopped the practice of the common meal. It had become a distraction from the essential thing. And the essential thing is worship. Remembering the Lord. They failed, those Corinthians, in two ways. First, they forgot the sanctity of the supper by treating it like an ordinary meal. And second, they failed by their behavior, because they showed by their behavior, contempt for the poor. After all, if the Lord's supper was just about eating, they could do that in their own homes. The church meets to worship God and celebrate our salvation, not to satisfy our appetites.

So, Paul tells them they had houses. Eat and drink there before they came to the meeting. Then, he scolds them for their shameful disregard of the poor and the church. "Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?" Well, they treated them as unworthy to eat with them. They didn't have the respect for them to wait and share the meal together. As though the poor were second class citizens. As though Christ had not shed as much as much blood for the poor as He had for the rich. The poor are equal members of the church. They are equal members with the rich. They've all, regardless of their status, socially, financially, they're all chosen by God and purchased by Christ. All have been made priests to God. We all share that position equally regardless of our social standing. And yet, the way they were treating the poor, they disregarded that.

Now, I will say this: it works both ways. It's not a problem that the rich had

because the rich are inherently bad and the poor are inherently virtuous. There's no virtue in poverty, and there's no virtue in being a poor person. And it could work the other way. It could be that the poor could despise the rich out of envy, and they could come to such a meal for the sole purpose of eating. After all, they could have a very nice meal. That may be the thing that governed their thinking and moved them and motivated them to take the Lord's supper. And that too would be wrong. But, that's not the problem that Paul is dealing with. That problem is a possibility, but the problem in Corinth and the problem that Paul was addressing here was the abuse of the poor by the Rich.

So, just as factions and crises are a test of our souls, as Paul has said in verse 18, so too different people in the Body of Christ can be something of a test as well. Our response to them reflects our character. It says something about us: how we respond to those around us, how we treat our fellow brethren in the church. Social distinctions end at the Lord's table. And one way to end that in our own thinking is to realize that we're all poor. We're all debtors to mercy alone. We all have been rescued and redeemed by Christ. If we're saved, we have. We haven't saved ourselves. If you're saved, it's not because you have a high social standing. It's not because you have money. Not because you don't have money. It's not because of anything in you that you're saved, anything in me that I am saved. It's all in God. It's all a work of His grace. So, we should all realize our equal lost condition in and of ourselves and realize all we have is due to the sovereign grace of God, and realizing that we're no different from one another in that regard. We should look after each other, be concerned about each other, have an equal love for one another.

The Corinthians didn't have that and they weren't doing that. So, Paul tells them he can't praise them for their behavior. He can praise them for their loyalty to doctrine, but they weren't living consistently with their doctrine. Can't praise them for their behavior. Not in this matter. As he explains in verse 23, he can't praise them because they knew better.

Now, I suspect that a large part of the problem was simply neglect of the things they knew. They were not thinking clearly. They were not thinking seriously about this. And so, their problem was one of indifference. They weren't focusing their mind on the whole purpose and meaning, because they had been instructed about all of this before. That's what Paul says. He taught them, and he taught them what the Lord had taught him. That's what he says in verse 23. "For I received from the

Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread."

Now, the fact that the Lord instituted this the night in which He was betrayed gives this special sentiment to the event, and it reminds us of the solemnity of it. This is no ordinary meal. This was instituted the night that the Lord was betrayed, the night that He gave His life into the hands of His enemies so that He could be a sacrifice for them. So, this is no ordinary meal. The reason it is an extraordinary meal is given in the next verses where the Lord explains the meaning of the elements. He took the bread in His hand, verse 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.'"

Now, as I said earlier, the Lord has given us a portrait of Himself in the wine and the bread. Think of the Lord's supper as that: a portrait of Him, a picture of what He has done for us. The bread illustrates His body. It was real, just as bread is real, just as bread is material, just as bread is tangible. So was He. He was an actual, physical human being. He is the eternal Son of God, but the eternal Son of God who at a point in time, entered history and became one of us, took to Himself a human nature, a genuine human body, just like you and me, yet without sin.

When He broke the bread, He illustrated something. He showed the end for which He had come into this world, that He came to die, and to die a violent death, a sacrificial death for all of His people. And that's illustrated in the breaking of the bread. It was for them personally. It was for their benefit and blessing, because He would sacrifice Himself, and this is what He was indicating to them that night. He would sacrifice Himself for their salvation in order to pay the penalty for their sins. He would pay the ransom price to set them free. And by breaking it, and distributing the pieces, He was able to demonstrate that it was for many. It was not for one. It was not for two. It was for all of them. And for believers down through the ages. All believers share equally in the bread, so to speak. All believers share equally in Christ. All share in the benefits of His death, Jew and Gentile alike, rich and poor alike, slave and free, male and female, all who believe in Him share equally in Christ. He's illustrating that by breaking the bread and distributing it.

Verse 25. "In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" The New Covenant. Now, that's the promise that we find in the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31. It's different from the Old Covenant. It's

different from the covenant that Moses established at Sinai, the Covenant of the Law, which was a bilateral covenant. Two parties with responsibilities. If one fails, the covenant fails. God would never fail, but what about Israel? They said all these things, we will do, and yet they could do them. They couldn't do them from the very beginning. Moses comes down with the two tablets, the Ten Commandments. And what's he find? Israel's already breaking them. They're worshipping the golden calf.

And so it went throughout their history. And that was the whole purpose, really, of the law, to demonstrate that we cannot be faithful, that we cannot be obedient, that we cannot be righteous. We need a Savior. We need a New Covenant, a covenant that is unilateral, a covenant that is dependent solely on the Lord God, and that's what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 31. It was a covenant of grace, a covenant in which God will forgive our sins forever, and put His law within our hearts. He will transform us. He will make us new creatures with acceptable standing with Him, justified in His sight, and He will remove our guilt. He will wipe the slate clean, and give us the supernatural ability to live obediently. That's the New Covenant. That's represented in the cup of wine, which symbolizes both the sacrifice that established the covenant at Calvary and the covenant itself. And all of this, the bread and wine of the supper, recall the unleavened bread, and the blood of the lamb in the Passover celebration, suggesting that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover. He is the deliverer. And this simple ceremony was established so that we would remember Him and what He's done for us. That He's delivered us from spiritual slavery to sin.

That's it. That's what the Lord tells us to do in both verse 24 and again in verse 25. Do this in remembrance of Me. It's pretty simple. Too simple for some people. The supper has been the center of controversy throughout much of the history of the church. And the argument, the difficulties and the differences, focus pretty much on the statement: "This is My body." The Roman Catholic Church interprets it literally. They believe in the doctrine known as transubstantiation, that the bread is literally transformed into the actual body of Christ when the priest prays over it.

But what He said there at the night of the Passover, is really no more literal and no different from what He said elsewhere when He made statements like, "I am the bread of life," in John 6. Or, "I am the door," and "I am the way," and "I am the vine." He wasn't saying He's a literal vine. He was drawing an analogy between a vine and Himself, between a door and Himself, between a way or a road and Himself.

So, there's a difference, and I think a serious difference in the way

interpretations are made of that passage. But, what's more serious than just a difference of interpretation is the significance that the Roman church has placed upon the Lord's supper or the mass, and that is that they believe we're literally eating the Body of Christ and that that is what saves, that salvation is through that ceremony.

Now, that is contrary to grace. That's contrary to Scripture, which teaches that we are saved by the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, not by any ceremony. Baptism or the Lord's supper or whatever. It's the blood of Christ that saves, just as the blood of the lamb saved those firstborn children in Egypt long before. It's the blood of Christ, and there are many texts that can prove that, but I'll give just one. Revelation chapter 5 and verse 9 where the Lord is being praised in heaven, the Son is being praised, and they are singing to Him: "You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." They were purchased. They were saved by the blood of Christ.

So, we're saved by His sacrifice, not by ceremonies. And the Lord has told us to remember that, to focus on that. Now, the reformers recognized that, as the meaning here. But even they differed a little on their interpretation. Calvin, for example, taught what is known as the spiritual presence view, meaning that Christ is not literally present, but is spiritually present in the Lord's supper, and present by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, when the Christian takes the bread and the wine, he or she feeds on the power of Christ through the spirit.

Well, the reformer of Zurich, Huldrych Zwingli, had a slightly different interpretation. He explained that the supper is simply a memorial, and I tend to favor that view. The Lord said: "Do this in remembrance of Me." that's all. Remember Me. Still, having said that, it's true that the Lord is present with us when we meet and take the supper. Revelation chapter 2 and verse 1, He's described as walking among the golden lampstands, which is the churches. He does minister to us when we take the bread and wine. He changes us. He nourishes us spiritually. It's very important for our spiritual health that we do that, that we obey His instruction.

But He ministers to us. He changes us by this act of remembering. Now, that's no small thing. I think one could think that. They could think, well, this other is more lofty. These other views are much higher and give a sense of greater power in the elements of the Lord's supper. And yet, remembering is very significant, and very important. As I say, it's no small thing. It's essential. It is what Israel's entire religion

was designed to do. It was designed to help them remember the Lord, and remember great truths about the Lord and about themselves. That was the purpose, for example, of the Passover. It was when Israel forgot, that Israel got in trouble, that the people backslid, they fell into error, and ultimately apostatized.

So, you have the Lord giving a very strong warning, for example, in Psalm 50 verse 22 in which He said, "Now consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver you." Those are powerful words, and they bring out the danger, the real danger of forgetting God, forgetting the things of God. And what the psalmist is saying, what the Lord is saying through the psalmist is: don't forget.

Well, that being the problem, forgetting, how do we avoid it? How do we not forget? I think it's very simple: by remembering, and remembering often. That's what we do in the Lord's supper, and that's the Lord's instruction in verse 26. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Well, the early church did this often. It did it weekly. You see that as you read through the Book of Acts. You see it, for example, in Acts chapter 20 and verse 7 where Luke wrote, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread." To break bread is a way of speaking of the Lord's supper. It's taking the bread of the supper and breaking it. So, it's a reference to celebrating the Lord's supper. And, in the Lord's instruction to Paul, He told him in verse 24, "Do this," with the meaning "do this continually." That's the force of the grammar of the text. It's a present imperative, meaning it's a command in the present tense, which has the force of doing it regularly. Go on doing this, He says, not periodically, but do it consistently and regularly. It should be a regular part of the weekly service. It was in the early church. It should be here. It is here. We need to continually remember the Lord, who He is, and what He has done for us, and what He continues to do for us, and what He will yet do for us.

We remember His love for us when we take the Lord's supper. We remember the nature of His love for us, that it is unconditional and completely sacrificial. He shed His blood for us. He died so that we could have His life. And He's always faithful to us. In Romans 8 verse 32, Paul wrote, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Since the Father did not withhold His own Son from us, there is nothing

good and beneficial that He will withhold from us. If He did the greatest for us, and He did in giving His Son, He'll do the lesser for us. That follows logically. He'll always be faithful to do that.

Now, the Lord's supper reminds us of that. It reminds us of many things. It gives us a lot to reflect upon. It's important that we do it. But having said that, it's also temporary. Paul says we observe it until He comes. When a loved one is absent, away on a trip or perhaps serving his or her country in a foreign land, a picture gives us a visual reminder of that person, so we put up a portrait of our son or our daughter or a loved one. And we look at it. Perhaps we look at it often, and we think about that person. But when that person comes home, our eyes don't fix upon the picture. We put it away. We have the reality with us. That person is with us. We have the real thing.

And so it will be with the Lord. When He returns, we won't need a portrait or a memorial to help us remember. We have Him. The celebration points to that. Every Sunday evening, when we take the Lord's supper, we are remembering that, either directly or indirectly. But, it points to the future and it reminds us that there is a goal to history, that time is not simply clicking along, that history is not just one thing after another. It's going somewhere. There is a path that it's on. There is a direct goal for which is moving, and that is the kingdom to come. Christ is alive. He's seated at the Father's right hand, and He's coming again. That was a promise He made. We are reminded of that in the Lord's supper. We do it until He comes, which reminds us that He is coming. And when He comes, as He says at the end of the Book of Revelation, He's coming with His reward.

So, those are things we need to remember. That gives us perspective on life. Everything in the present has significance for the future. Nothing we do is insignificant. And as we observe the Lord's supper, we're reminded of that, and reminded of the ultimate end of all things, and we're to be looking for it. But the main thing we do in the Lord's supper is remember His sacrifice. And by doing that, Paul says we proclaim the Lord's death.

So, the Lord's supper on the one hand is a portrait in bread and wine, a masterpiece of our Lord, of who He is, of what He's done. But it's also a sermon. We proclaim the cross. That's what saved us. The cross is everything. And what the Lord has asked us to do is remember it, and remember Him, by observing the Lord's supper. That's important. That's essential. But as important as that is, it is of no

value unless we have first appropriated what the Lord's supper represents, unless we have first believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and trusted in His person and work alone for our salvation. He is the Savior, and the reality is: every one of us needs a Savior. I don't know your spiritual condition. It may be that there are some in here who have never put their faith in Christ. You're like all of us. You need a savior. You're a sinner, just like all of us. There's only one Savior. That's Christ. Look to Him. Put your faith in Him. The moment you do, you're forgiven. You're transformed into a new creation. God begins doing a great work in Your life. So, look to Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, who died that all who believe in Him would be saved forever. And God help us to do that, and to worship Him well. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us, and so we see it in this text. We come to another problem that the Corinthians had, but it's a problem that we all have. We don't have a problem exactly like theirs. We don't come here and celebrate a meal. We don't have the problem on a Sunday evening of gluttony and drunkenness, certainly. But, we do have a problem, Father, that we could come here with our minds on other things. And while we don't treat the Lord's supper like an ordinary meal, we may not treat it with the sanctity that we should. We don't come to this place with our minds prepared and we don't reflect deeply upon who Your son is and what He's done for us. Help us to do that. Help us to be better about that. Help us to understand these things correctly and worship Him rightly. We'll be blessed by it. We know that.