

Sunday, November 27, 2011—Questions About Communion

Introduction

- GLBC is now four years old. In those four years we have never taken communion. There are a couple reasons for that:
 - Board priorities and attention on other matters
 - Questions about how we wanted to do communion.
- When one reads the passages in the Pauline epistles regarding communion it is apparent that they conducted the Lord's Supper differently than most assemblies do today. It seems as if they had a regular meal because people came hungry, seemingly expecting to get filled up. In fact it is a known historical fact that they had something called a love feast which would be similar to the fellowship dinners we have here at GLBC. They would then take the Lord's Supper in conjunction with these love feasts. This is where problems originated for the saints in Corinth.

I Corinthians 11:17-34

- Verse 17—Paul could not and would not praise them concerning their assembling together because their coming together for the worse. Times of fellowship amongst the saints in the local church should be a positive thing not a negative thing.
- Verses 20-21—when you get together with your family do you have one person who is always the first one to get their food or expects everyone else to wait upon them? The Corinthians were literally having a meal where some were eating before others to the excess, while some were not getting any food, and others still were getting drunk.
- Verse 22—the conduct of the Corinthians was such that they were despising the church of God and bringing shame upon those who were less fortunate. Their handling of this situation was disgraceful. If they were going to make such a mess of things then they shouldn't have the meal together and just eat at home. Paul cannot praise them because of the mess they had made of things.
- Verse 23—Paul says that he received the information regarding the Lord's Supper from the Lord and then delivered that information to the Corinthians. The risen and glorified Jesus Christ gave Paul information regarding communion as part of the body of truth given to the Church the Body of Christ. Just as Christ gave Paul other revelations about the present dispensation of Grace including within that information was the issue of the Lord Supper.
 - I Corinthians 15:3—Paul delivered unto them that which he received.
 - Galatians 1:11-12—the Lord's Supper was ever bit a part of the specific revelation given to the Apostle Paul.

- Therefore the meaning of the Lord's Table transcends the significance of what happened in the upper room on the night before his crucifixion. The elements are the same but their significance is now fully understood.
- Verses 24-25—what did Christ mean when he held up a piece of bread and said this is my body? Is he literally saying that the piece of bread was his body or that it was symbolic of his body?
 - John 10:7—is Christ a piece of wood on hinges with a knob? Clearly not. If I hold up a map of Michigan and say this is Michigan you understand my meaning. It represents MI. It shows things about MI but it is not really MI.
- When Paul says, “take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you:” he is clearly speaking in a symbolic way. Despite what the Catholic Church says the bread and wine are not literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ.
- It is important to notice that the Lord's Supper is meant as a remembrance of what Christ did.
 - Matthew 20:28, 26:28—in the upper room Christ's blood was shed for many, i.e., my people Israel
 - I Timothy 2:6—when believers today observe the Lord's Table we reinforce the truth of the mystery. The fact that God is today in the dispensation of Grace forming a body of both Jews and Gentiles that are being reconciled to God equally in one body by the cross. When we take communion not only are we remembering what Christ did on our behalf and in our stead but we also reaffirm before the principalities and powers in heavenly places the basis upon which God could form the body of Christ, the crosswork of this son.
- Verse 26—how often are we supposed to take communion? As often or as often as an assembly deems necessary. There is no set pattern for how often or when it should be done. This verse also touches on the duration of communion during the current dispensation. How long is this to be observed and practiced in the verse? Till he come. Has he come yet? So is communion still for today? Yes
- Verse 27-29—is anyone worthy in and of themselves for partaking in communion? No. If you are in Jesus Christ are you worthy to take it. If you have some sin in your life are you worthy? Yes because the issue is not your worth or merit but the imputed merits of Christ to your account. We have a complete and perfect position in Jesus Christ that is unchanged by our faults and failure in this life.
 - Romans 3:24—we who have trusted the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the only total and complete payment for our sins are justified and have God's very righteousness imputed to our account.
 - Romans 5:1—because we are justified and have God's very righteousness imputed to our account we have peace with God.
 - Romans 8:1—nor are we under condemnation

- Ephesians 1:7-9
- Who are the only people then who are unworthy to take communion? Unbelievers those who have never trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- Verse 28—one needs to examine themselves to make sure they are a believer. How do you do that? Have you at some point realized you were a sinner that you could not save yourself? Have you trusted that Christ died on the cross and shed his blood for your sin and rose again on the third day? What are you trusting in to get to heaven? If you can honestly say that you are relying exclusively on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary you are worthy to partake. We who are saved can confidently take part in communion because we are complete in Christ.
- End of Verse 27 and 29—communion is a picture of the death and resurrection of Christ. It commemorates his work for us on the cross. If an unbeliever partakes of the elements of communion he/she is violating the meaning of the act because they have never put their faith in the act (crosswork of Christ) the elements represent. The word damnation here doesn't mean dying and going to hell. It is condemnation. The unbeliever will go to hell when they die but not because they eat or drink of the Lord's Table but because they are yet in their sins alienated from the life of God.
- Verse 30—harkens back to the earlier portion in verses 17-22. Those that were sick and had died did so because of the excesses of their behavior in this matter not the direct punishment of God. The conduct of the Corinthians was confusing the real issues of the Lord's Table. Their excessive behavior had caused some of them to become sick and even die as the natural consequences of their behavior.
- Verses 31-32—Paul has been chastening the Corinthians throughout the duration of this passage. He was been seeking to correct their poor behavior through the word of God.
 - Psalms 94:10-12-- The first definition is that of correction. This form of correction takes the form of instruction, the law provided correction which is a form of chastisement. Therefore, the first definition simply means to educate or inform with the goal of correcting.
 - Proverbs 3:11-12—Once again we see chastisement associated with correction. This second definition deals with keeping the law and fearing the punishment of God that is outlined in the Law. This is the form of Chastisement that believers are taught is in effect today.
 - Hebrews 12:5-11—See whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Scourgeth—means to flog or beat with a whip.

- I believe that the chastening of the Lord during the dispensation of Grace comes from the word of God not from circumstances in our lives. We have no way of knowing if the things happening to us are the result of the direct punishment of God or the effects of living in a sin-cursed world.
- Verse 34—the bottom line is this. Communion should not cause you to feel condemnation. Communion is a time to remember and to celebrate what Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary. It should be a time of rejoicing. Not a time of fear and condemnation.

Conclusion

- We are going to have communion for the first time during our Christmas Eve service on Saturday, December 24.
- Moving forward we are going to have communion on 5th Sunday of those months with five Sundays in them.