

Sunday, June 2, 2019—The Lord’s Supper, Part 1

Introduction

- During the month of June, we are going to be studying some things regarding the Lord’s Supper as a lead up to observing the Lord’s Table on June 30, the last Sunday of the month.
- Historically, the Lord’s Table has been a sticking point for many Pauline Dispensationalists for different reasons. The following is a short list of those reasons:
 - *Relevance*—did Paul intend the Lord’s Table to be a permanent observance for the body of Christ during the dispensation of grace?
 - *Mode*—how should it be done? Too religious and reminiscent of the Catholic Mass.
 - *Frequency*—how often should it be done?
 - *Fear*—what about the verses that talk about eating and drinking unworthily and damnation?
- So why are we talking about this now at Grace Life Bible Church?
 - 2007-2011—for the first four years of the church’s history we did not observe the Lord’s Table. This was due largely to unresolved questions that some of the brethren had regarding it.
 - Sunday, November 27, 2011—I preached a sermon titled “Questions About Communion” in which I explained that we would be taking communion for the first time the following month.
 - Saturday, December 24, 2011—was the first time we took communion at GLBC. From that point forward communion was generally observed four times a year on the 5th Sunday of each month in a traditional manner. Crackers and juice were passed out by the elders and the entire congregation partook together.
 - April 19, 2015—I started preaching through I Corinthians.
 - June 2016—when preaching through I Corinthians 5 I started to have strong misgivings over the mode we were using to observe the Lord’s Supper. At some point a decision was made to suspend observing of the Lord’s Supper until we had studied through I Corinthians 11.
 - August & September 2017—I preached through I Corinthians 11.

- Now, nearly two years later we are having this discussion.

Terminology

- I Corinthians 10:21—the “Lord’s table” is one term Paul uses to discuss the matter.
- I Corinthians 11:20—the “Lord’s supper” is another Pauline term. Taken together, the saints gather at the “Lord’s table” to eat the “Lord’s supper.”
- I Corinthians 10:16—“communion” is the result of eating the “Lord’s supper” with the other saints. In other words, we don’t take communion. Communion is the fellowship that we together as saints around the Lord’s table.
 - Philippians 1:5—the word translated “fellowship” is same word translated “communion” in I Cor. 10:16.
- *Communion*—Fellowship; intercourse between two persons or more; interchange of transactions, or offices; a state of giving and receiving; agreement; concord. 2) Mutual intercourse or union in religious worship, or in doctrine and discipline.

The Question of Pauline Ordinances

- I Corinthians 11:2—Paul wants the Corinthians to remember him in all things and keep the ordinances as he delivered them unto the Corinthians. This verse follows from verse 1. How are the Corinthians going to follow Christ? By following Paul. How are the Corinthians going to “remember” Paul in “all things?” By keeping the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto them.
- At this point it is important to note the chain of command established by verses 1 and 2.
 - Paul follows Christ.
 - Christ “delivered” “ordinances” unto Paul for the body of Christ to follow.
 - Paul “delivered” the “ordinances” to the Corinthians.
 - The Corinthians “remember” Paul by keeping the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto them.
 - When the Corinthians follow Paul by keeping the “ordinances” he “delivered” unto them they are in fact following Christ.
- *Ordinances*—is a word that many grace people are uncomfortable with. Therefore, we need to make sure we take some time to understand its meaning and usage.

- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines an “ordinance” as follows:
 - A rule established by authority; a permanent rule of action. An *ordinance* may be a law or statute of sovereign power. In this sense it is often used in the Scriptures. Exodus 15:25. Numbers 10:8. Ezra 3:10. It may also signify a decree, edict or rescript, and the word has sometimes been applied to the statutes of Parliament, but these are usually called acts or laws. In the United States, it is never applied to the acts of Congress, or of a state legislature.
 - Observance commanded.
 - Appointment.
 - Established rite or ceremony. Hebrews 9:1. In this sense, baptism and the Lord's supper are denominated ordinances.
- Of the many definitions provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* one of them includes the following:
 - “An authoritative instruction as to how to proceed or act; an established set of principles; a system of government; authority; discipline. *Obs.*”
- In the New Testament, the word translated “ordinances” (*paradosis*) in I Cor. 11:2 occurs 13 times in 13 verses. Of these 13 occurrences, it is translated “tradition” 12 times and “ordinances” 1 time by the King James translators.
 - II Thessalonians 2:15—in this verse Paul uses the word “traditions” to refer to what he had taught the Thessalonians.
 - II Thessalonians 3:6—when Paul uses the word “traditions” he is referring to the set of instructions he gave to the churches for their “orderly” functioning. Where did Paul get these instructions from? He got them from Christ.
- I Corinthians 11:2—the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto the Corinthians were for their “orderly” functioning as an assembly both personally and collectively.

When Ye Come Together

- I Corinthians 11:17—the first thing to note about verse 17 is that it marks the beginning of a new paragraph that runs through the end of verse 22.
- *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not*—the verbs “declare” and “praise” found in first part of verse 17 are in the present tense and the active voice. This means that Paul is in the

process of declaring something unto the Corinthians for which he **is not** praising them. In other words, Paul is declaring unto the Corinthians that he is not pleased with their conduct.

- *that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse*—Paul’s declaration is that when the Corinthians were “come together” it was “not for the better, but for the worse.” Put another way, their conduct was so bad that it possibly would have been better if they hadn’t come together at all.
- I Corinthians 11:1-2—this follows for the context we have studied thus far. Paul can’t praise the Corinthians in verse 17 because they hadn’t been following the “ordinances” as Paul delivered them back in verse 2.
- I Corinthians 11:18—the phrase “when ye come together in the church” makes it clear that Paul is talking about their coming together in the local church in verse 17. When they were “come together in the church” it was “not for the better but for the worse.”
- The first problem was that there were division among them. Recall from previous studies that Paul began the book by talking about this divisive spirit.
 - I Corinthians 1:10-12—the bulk of chapters 1 through 4 deals with the divisive nature and conduct of the Corinthians.

Eating the Lord’s Supper

- I Corinthians 11:20—one problem that existed when the Corinthians came together was their attitude and conduct as it pertained to the “Lord’s Supper.”
- According to verse 20, the primary goal of the Corinthians coming together “into one place,” was “not to eat the Lord’s Supper.” Paul’s comments here indicate that many believed that it was.
- I Corinthians 11:21— *For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper*—the Corinthians were literally eating a meal when they came together. The English word “supper” means the following, according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*:
 - “The evening meal. The dinner of fashionable people would be the *supper* of rustics.”
- The primary meanings of the Greek word translated “supper” are: “a formal meal usually held at the evening,” and “food taken at evening.”
- This “supper” was out of order. “Everyone” or all the Corinthians were looking out for themselves first in taking their own supper without regard for other people.
- *and one is hungry, and another is drunken*—the second half of the verse tells you the results of their conduct in the first half. Some didn’t get anything to eat and went away hungry while others

partook to the excess and became drunk.

- This verse challenges our traditional understanding of the Lord's Supper in the following ways:
 - The Corinthians were eating a meal not just crackers and juice. They were not practicing a sanitized version of the Catholic Mass.
 - Paul rebukes them for the manner in which they were eating this meal, as a gluttonous drunken feast.
 - I Corinthians 5:2, 8, 11-13—Paul told the Corinthians not to be with this fornicator and to put him out of the assembly. In doing so this person would not have eaten the Lord's Supper with the Corinthians.