

FULFILLING THE LORD'S REQUEST

I Corinthians 11:1-2, 23-30

As a Christian, have you ever stopped to consider the importance of the Lord's Supper in relation to spiritual maturity? Our scripture lesson makes it plain that the proper observance of this feast of remembrance contributes much to a Christian's growth in grace.

However, it must be made clear that the Lord's Supper is not a means of obtaining salvation or personal merit. In fact, this feast is restricted to scripturally baptized believers only. The Lord's Supper was instituted by the Master Himself in order to provide a means whereby we might uniquely demonstrate our Christian faith, hope, and love until our Lord returns. It pictures truth for believers in connection with the past, the present, and the future.

To fulfill the Lord's dying request constitutes an act of communion between Christ and the Christian. It is also an act of commemoration. We remember the Lord Jesus in terms of His glorious person, His redemptive work, and His abiding presence. Furthermore, it is an act of contemplation. We meditate on His death on the cross for us, and contemplate His second coming. Moreover, it is an act of committal. One cannot observe the Lord's Supper in the proper way without examination by the Word, cleansing by the blood, and filling by the Spirit. Frequent and prayerful observance of the Lord's Supper will enrich the lives of believers, cause them to love their Lord more, and, on their part, result in a more loyal and faithful devotion to Christ and His church.

Having gathered around the Lord's table, there are three things that I want to say about our observance of this beautiful and meaningful ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

I. It Is An Act Of Obedience.

In introducing this important subject Paul said, "Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (I Corinthians 11:2). The Apostle quoted these words of our Saviour: "This do in remembrance of me" (11:24). Our obedience in observing this ordinance is to be characterized by three things.

1. A willingness.

Observance of the Lord's Supper is not a burdensome duty, but it is an act of willing obedience. Let us remember that the Lord Jesus instituted this ordinance with a loving request: "This do in remembrance of me." Our remembrance of the Lord's death, in response to His dying wish, is to be characterized by frequency. His request should constitute a real challenge to our hearts, especially when we fail to take advantage of such opportunities as the church provides for breaking the bread and remembering our Lord.

2. A worthiness.

God's Word says, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11:27). "Unworthily" does not have reference to the character of the one who is observing the Lord's Supper. Rather, it is an adverb and has to do with the manner in which it is observed. Anyone who attempts to observe the Supper in order to be saved does so unworthily. Anyone who attempts to substitute a gospel of human fellowship for the scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper observes it in an unworthy manner. His Supper must ever be a remembrance of Him and never a feast of friends. Whoever partakes of the Lord's Supper in order to show his fellowship with any human being certainly perverts the Supper and fails to observe it worthily.

3. A watchfulness.

Paul wrote about "not discerning the Lord's body" (I Corinthians 11:29). A believer who participates in the observance of the Supper has a far more sacred and important duty to perform than to inspect the attire of others, to talk in an undertone, or to look bored, because he is committed to a watchful obedience. To discern the Lord's body he must seek shadow to the Substance, and beyond the physical symbols to the precious Saviour Himself.

II. An Act Of Remembrance.

Our Lord said, "This do in remembrance of me." Observing the ordinance correctly affords a wonderful opportunity of "calling to mind" the Lord Jesus Himself. "Remembrance" occurs only four times in the New Testament, and three of these occur in connection with the Lord's Supper. The term denotes "an active calling to mind." It is a distinct activity whereby the whole personality is made alive to a given purpose. The purpose, in this instance, is that of a living encounter with Christ Himself. The whole being is involved in this act of remembrance.

1. The spirit is given over to adoration.

Deep thankfulness to God, in the light of Calvary love, finds expression in the "fruit of the lips." When a child of God is truly engaged in the holy activity of adoration, he should not be rushed or interrupted.

2. The soul is given over to contemplation.

There should be the recognition of Christ as the living One. Ever since the institution of the Lord's Supper, the bread has symbolized the yielding up of His holy body, and the wine the pouring out of His blood.

3. The body is given over to dedication.

"Eat this bread, and drink this cup." While we know that no merit is communicated through the bread and wine, it must be clear to the spiritual mind that the physical act of eating and drinking of these symbols is a faith identification of the believer's body with the body and blood of Christ. Identification with Christ demands the dedication of our souls, our lives, and our all. Every observance of the Lord's Supper is an occasion for adoration, contemplation, and dedication.

III. An Act Of Testimony.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." The words, "Ye do show," really mean, "Ye do proclaim."

1. It bears testimony to the fellowship of the church.

2. It bears testimony to the faith of the church.

The central fact of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" is the death of Christ. All other Christian doctrines are held together by this pivotal truth. The Lord's Supper proclaims that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

3. It bears testimony to the future of the church.

"Ye do proclaim the Lord's death till he come." Every time that we remember the

Lord in the manner which He prescribed, we declare in no uncertain terms the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Indeed, the Lord's Supper is the link between the cross and the crown, the first advent and the second advent. Every time that we gather in this capacity we should think more deeply of this blessed hope until we are purified by its sanctifying influence.

As Christians, we believe that the first coming of Christ has taken place. Unfortunately, some of us lose sight of the glorious prospect of His second advent. This feast of remembrance is designed to remind us that our Lord Jesus will return to rapture His own.

So, as an act of testimony, we not only declare the fellowship of the church, and the faith of the church, but also the future of the church. Indeed, refusal to attend the service in which the Lord's Supper is observed is a repudiation of one's testimony to the great truths of the oneness of Christ's body, the centrality of the cross, and the glorious hope of the church. When and where this feast of remembrance is given its rightful place, steadfast continuance is registered in the lives of God's people. May each observance of the Supper call forth from each one of us love and devotion to our precious Lord, as we press on to spiritual maturity.