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The Lord's Supper – 1 Cor 10:1-22

Introduction – The elders would like us to consider the Lord's Supper as we prepare to begin communion on a weekly basis next week. Our end and purpose in making this change is to grow closer to our Lord, to be more conformed to His image, to be strengthened by Him in Word and sacrament, and to be knit together as one body. We are instructed that the sacrament is to be given with the Word, and so as we make this change it is appropriate to consider the instruction of the Scriptures.

Does It Say Anything About "Weekly?" – Our passage doesn't directly, nor do the Scriptures give express warrant. But 1 Cor 10-11 is really one sustained argument and we should note that in 11:20 Paul's point is that when they come together it is *supposed* to be to eat the Lord's Supper. After Pentecost, Luke records that the believers met, "*breaking bread*" (Acts 2:42), and well into Paul's ministry, the disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7) on the first day of the week (the Lord's Day). Add to that our understanding of the Lord's Day Worship service as a time when God renews His covenant with us. Covenant renewal, biblically understood, ends with a fellowship meal. In the end, the burden of proof seems to rest on the question, "why not weekly?"

Old Testament Examples (vv1-11) – Paul draws connections for us between the Old and New Covenant communities. Old Testament Israel was baptized and was fed by Christ in the wilderness journey while receiving the Law of God. It was possible for them to partake of Christ in these activities and yet, because they lacked faith, they found themselves destroyed and condemned. Paul warns us that these are examples and admonitions for us in the New Covenant because there are blessings and curses in the New Covenant as well.

Spiritual Food and Drink – In this example, we can find clear teaching on the nature of the sacraments. Paul calls the manna and the water "*spiritual*" food and drink. This is because he is not dividing "spiritual" from "physical" the way that we sometimes do. There was real manna, a real Rock, and real H₂O; they were not ethereal illusions. He means "spiritual" in the manner of a covenantal presence. In partaking of these things, the community partook of something more than simply those things. "*That Rock was Christ.*" Sounds like, "*this is My body.*" This is His objective, covenantal presence.

A Covenantal Presence – This helps us to avoid the error of Roman Catholicism and the idea of a "physical presence" of the Lord in the bread and the wine. But it also helps us avoid the error that there is no real presence at all – that it is simply a means of remembering. In the giving of bread and wine, God tells us He is offering to us, objectively, His only begotten, once-crucified, now resurrected Son. Jesus said, "This is my body....this is my blood."

Blessing and Cursing (vv12-22) – Paul warns that it is possible to fall (v12) but that God has provided a way out of the temptations which are like those of our older brothers and sisters. And then he calls the cup a "*cup of blessing*" (v16). But the rest of the context shows that this is not a cup of automatic blessing. When the Lord's Supper is taken with faith, there is blessing. And when the bread and wine are taken faithlessly, there is cursing. Paul says that some are sick and some have even died for partaking of the Lord's supper faithlessly (11:30). This is why we must flee idolatry (v14). In Corinth, this idolatry was manifesting itself in two main ways; divisions (a form of individualism) and sexual immorality. Again, notice the Old and New Covenant parallels, in both communions it is possible to find bodies scattered all over.

Partaking of the Altar – The partaking of the cup is the communion (fellowship) of the blood of Christ and partaking of the bread is a communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ (v16). We partake because we are one body (v17) and Paul warns the Corinthians later that if they do not discern this "*one body*," the "*Lord's body*" (because they are living hypocritically, in idolatry), they eat and drink damnation upon themselves (11:29-30).

Paul connects the communion meal to the "*partaking of the altar*" in the old covenant sacrifices (v18). In the Lord's Supper, as in the Passover meal, as well as in the Peace Offerings, the participants enjoyed a feast from that which had been offered to the Lord. God's presence was specially near, and because of the sacrifice, God was giving back to the worshipper life, peace, and joy in the communion shared with God. The Sacrifice was completely fulfilled for God's people once (and once only) by Christ's death on the cross. The benefits of that sacrifice are something we partake of now each time we celebrate communion. "*This is my body.*"

Pursuing Blessing – We observe the Lord's Supper for the purpose of drawing near to our Lord and to pursue blessing. What Paul is carefully teaching is that there is not an automatic blessing here. Therefore, we must come in faith and joy with the appropriate reverence and holy fear.

Follow the Order of the Service – We come to the Lord's House on the Lord's Day where we are cleansed, consecrated and then join with Him in communion; there is a natural order to this for every Lord's Day. We do so in covenant with Him by faith and we do so as the communion of saints, not simply individuals. We must come and we must discern the Lord's body (11:29).

Food for the Faithful – Christ is not resident in a physical way in the bread or in the wine. But He is present; for those who come in

faith, He is present for blessing. For those who come in a faithless manner, He is there for judgment. But Jesus is present for both. In addition, for the faithful, as we draw near and partake, it will have an affect on us; and blessing and grace is not always simple and clean.

Always Preparing – As this Lord's Day service becomes a central part of our being, because we know that we are gathering together before the Lord and coming to His Table, everything we do during the week starts to point towards this time and becomes shaped by this Table-time.

Always Spreading – Remember, this Table will remain a part of this age until the time that all the world is coming to the Table. Coming to this feast teaches us how to feast elsewhere and continually prepares us for the Great Wedding Feast.

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