

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor
Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)
18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
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1 Corinthians 11:18-26 “The Lord’s Supper: Communion and Remembrance”
(V.20 is the only place we find the words “Lord’s Supper” in Scripture.)

Intro. This morning we assemble together, in obedience to the Lord Jesus, to remember His death for our sins. I believe that the Lord only gave us two ordinances to observe, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and both point to the death of Christ. One truth that our Lord insisted that we must not forget is the teaching concerning His death. When Paul went to the city of Corinth, he said, “I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). That was the all-important foundational truth for the salvation of a soul. Other truths should be learned and added to that essential foundation, but Christ, and His death for us, is the essential foundation for a life. So the Lord gave us this memorial supper, and commanded us to observe it, so that we would always remember Him and His death for us.

And certainly, He has given us an effective means for doing that. We know that what we see impresses us more than what we hear. And so Christ has given us visible symbols of His body and His shed blood. There is an effective message to be found in the receiving of the elements of the Lord’s Supper.

And who should receive the elements of the Lord’s Supper? Only those who have received Christ into their lives should receive the elements of the Lord’s Supper. It is hypocritical to receive the symbols of His body and blood if you have not received the forgiveness that He offers through His body and shed blood. And if you have never received Christ as your Savior, this memorial supper is just as much for you, not to receive the symbols, but to receive the *message* of the symbols. Paul said, in v.26, “For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” One way we share the Gospel with others is through the Lord’s Supper. The bread reminds us of the body in which He suffered. The cup reminds us of the blood that He shed. So we gather to proclaim the fact and meaning of the death of Jesus to all who have not received Christ. Then we will extend an invitation for you to publicly receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

So this morning, we will consider two key aspects of the Lord’s Supper: it is a time of communion, and it is a time of remembrance. First of all, it should be:

I. A TIME OF COMMUNION

Sometimes we call this service a communion service. That word is found back in 1 Cor. 10:16 in reference to the Lord’s Supper. There Paul says, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” The word “communion” (*koinonia*) means fellowship. The Lord’s Supper demonstrates in a symbolic way our fellowship with the Lord Jesus through His shed blood (1 Jn. 1:6-7). But here in chapter 11 we see that it should also be a time of fellowship with other believers. And “fellowship” means to have in common, to be united in heart, soul, and mind. We share a common meal, remembering a Savior that we all have in common. This is another reason why only *believers* are to partake of the Lord’s Supper. You should not share in the common

bread¹ if you do not share with us the same faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper should be a time for us to restore or strengthen our fellowship with the Lord, and with each other.

Now when we gather for communion:

A. We Should Acknowledge Disunity and Conflict – After all, Paul also said in v.28, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” If expressing our fellowship is one of the goals of the Lord's Supper, then we should acknowledge and correct anything that divides us, and harms the fellowship of believers. Ever since sin became a human problem, conflict has been a common symptom of the sin problem. Shortly after sin entered the human race through Adam and Eve, Cain killed his brother Abel, and thousands of wars have taken place in human history ever since. Unfortunately, churches are not immune from the problem of conflict.

In the accounts of the Lord's Supper itself, we can see two examples of conflict:

1. Strife – In Lk. 22 we read that the disciples had sat down with the Lord for the last supper. The Lord had shared about His death that would soon take place. They had partaken of the bread and the wine. Yet, that very night they were disputing over who would be the greatest among them (v.22). Of course, Peter would make the claim, since he was the leader of the apostles. James and John were part of the inner circle of 3, and they claimed to be the greatest since Peter got in trouble with his mouth all too often! The others were chosen apostles, and they certainly thought they were greater than the other disciples of Jesus. The problem is, such selfishness and pride will always lead to conflict. The Corinthian church had a problem with strife (1 Cor. 3:3).

Do you need to confess the problem of strife with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

2. Divisions - In v.18 we read, “For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.” The word translated “divisions” is *schisma* in Greek. We get our word “schism” from this word. This word literally refers to a tear or a split. Then, in v.19 the word translated “factions” (*hairesis*) is a little stronger. This word refers to a situation where different people choose which group they are going to identify with according to opinions, preferences, personalities, or other factors. If the problem is not corrected, the two or more cliques will often formally split from one another. This congregation had a common salvation, a common Savior, and yet they were divided into groups with the potential of an actually split! This was manifest even when they assembled for the Lord's Supper!

Why were they divided? In chapter 1 we see they were divided over their leaders (vv.12-13), whether Paul, Peter, or Apollos. In chapter 11 they were divided into economic and social classes. Look at vv.20-21, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry” At the common meal that preceded the Lord's Supper, evidently the rich did not share their food with the poor. What probably happened was the wealthier members in the church formed cliques of relatives and friends, who sat together and kept all the food that they brought for their own little group. The working poor probably arrived later than the well-to-do, and in some cases, had no food to contribute to the common meal. By the time they arrived, there was nothing left to eat! They remained hungry. How inconsiderate of some, who had gorged themselves with food.

¹ This is why some church eat from the same loaf of bread.

So they were literally divided. The early New Testament church generally met in various homes throughout a city for instruction, prayer, and fellowship. But evidently all Christians in a city would gather together at one place in the evening at various times to worship and to observe the Lord's Supper. In fact, Paul says in v.20, "Therefore when you come together in one place...." Perhaps the working poor who arrived later than most even had to sit outside the main assembly and they were truly divided as a church! One group of Christians had the best seats in the house, while the other group sat on the floor, or even tried to listen from the outside. So the church was divided.

Churches still face strife and divisions today. There will be this faction or that faction. But this is not God's will. The Apostle John wrote I Jn. 1:3, "that you might have fellowship with us...." So what should we do?

B. Implement the Solution - Paul attributed their divisions to their carnality (3:1-4) and self-centeredness. No doubt pride was also part of the problem (3:21; 4:7). So let me share what is the solution to such carnality and self-centeredness, that led to division:

1. Deny Self and Put Others First - Conflict will die just as soon as we die to self. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt. 16:29).

Jesus gave us the supreme example of self-denial when He gave His body to the beaten, and when He shed His blood. We should always remember that Christ was willing to leave His position of greatness in heaven and suffer and die for us. Let us follow His example and put others first. The kind of behavior that we see in v.21 is clearly just a case of selfishness. If selfishness and pride is the root cause of conflict, then self-denial and humility is the solution to the problem.

2. Be Willing to Serve Others - In John 13 Jesus gave an important lesson in serving others, right before the Last Supper. No servant was on hand to do the customary duty of washing feet upon arrival at the upper room. None of the disciples volunteered. So Jesus, the Lord of the universe, stooped to do the service of a slave. He instructed His disciples that they should do likewise. Conflict will cease with the attitude of humble service.

3. Love One Another - Again, the same night as the Last Supper Jesus taught His disciples in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Also, Jesus taught in John 15:12 & 17, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ... These things I command you, that you love one another."

Now let's see how love would have prevented the problem of division in the Corinthian church. 1 Cor. 13:5 says that love "does not seek its own." The Corinthian church should have been more like the Jerusalem church and show love by sharing with the poor. Acts 2:44 says that they had all things in common and shared with those who had need. Also, if we love one another as we should, we will quickly resolve our conflicts and disagreements with one another. We should share and meet needs.

4. Make Unity a Priority – Look back at 10:16-17, where Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." I believe that when they observed communion, they all ate from a single loaf. That symbolized their unity in Christ. And yet, they were allowing

their fellowship meal to divide the church! God's house, which is wherever Christians gather for worship, is the one place in all of the world where there ought to be a spirit of unity and communion. Phil. 2:2 says, "Be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Likewise, Paul said in Eph. 4:3 that we should be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." All believers are one in Christ. In the Church of the living God there are no uppers and lowers, rich or poor, black or white. We are all one, united into one body through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (12:12-13; Gal. 3:28). This is why we close our communion service by holding hands and singing a song of unity.

Our unity was very important to our Lord Jesus. He said in John 17:11, 20-23, "Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. ... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me...."

This oneness and fellowship will come, not only by doing the things that I have just mentioned, but also by majoring on the things that unite us. Paul makes that argument in Eph. 4:3-6). Every believer in this room is united by a common relationship with one Lord, Jesus Christ. We have the same mind concerning His death on the cross for our sins. In this supper we are united in proclaiming our Lord's death. We have many common beliefs. We all believe in the resurrection and Lordship of Jesus. Let's emphasize our common beliefs and goals.

But since we are still human, you can be sure that some differences of opinion will persist. And when we do have differences, don't selfishly or pridefully assert yourself without paying attention to the viewpoints and feelings of others. Then, let us focus our attention on the many things that we have in common.

Now before we enter into the fellowship of this memorial to the death of Christ, let's have a prayer that such unity and fellowship will be experienced in this service, and in the life of our church (Pray for unity, and confess the sins that lead to strife and divisions).

The Lord's Supper is not only a time of communion, but it is also:

II. A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE

The phrase spoken by Jesus, "in remembrance of Me," is spoken twice by Him, as we see in vv.24-25. "Remembrance" (*anamnesis*) is an intensive form of the word.² We should really be mindful to remember what our Lord did for us as we observe the Lord's supper. To remember both the fact of our Lord's loving sacrifice and the theological meaning of it is essential for a worthy observance of the Lord's Supper. Before we receive the elements of the Lord's Supper together, let's contemplate together the meaning of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and remember Him as He has commanded.

Now I'm going to ask the Deacons to come forward, and I will complete my message as part of our observance of the Lord's Supper.

Let us remember our Lord by means of these elements. First, the bread of the Lord's Supper is to remind us of:

² It is based on the verb *mimnesko*, which means to remember (Heb 13:3). The prefix *ana* intensifies the meaning.

A. The Body of Christ - Jesus said in v.24, "This is my body which is broken for you!" In the original language there is emphasis on "my body," perhaps in contrast to the body of the lamb just eaten. Let us remember and consider the following truths about the body of Jesus:

1. He Took on a Body of Flesh - John 1:14 says that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In doing so, He identified with us.

a) He experienced tiredness – Have you ever been tired, or even worn out? Well, Jesus experienced that with us. In Jn. 4:6 we read, "Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well."

b) He experienced family responsibilities – Joseph may have died by the time Jesus was a young man. As a carpenter Jesus may have provided not only for himself, but also for his mother and siblings. He knew what it was like to work for a living.

c) He experienced rejection by family, His home town, His own disciples, and He knew what it was like to be misunderstood. The prophet said He would be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief..." (Isa. 53:3). The apostle John said in John 1:11, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." John 7:5 says, "For even His brothers did not believe in Him."

2. He Experienced Temptation in His Body - Heb.4:15 says that Jesus, our High Priest, "was tempted in all points as we are...." He felt and experienced the temptations associated with the human body. He knows what we are going through. He was tempted, but Heb. 4:15 also says, "yet without sin." He opened the way to victory for the rest of us.

3. He Gave His Body in Sacrifice for Our Sins – Jesus said in Jn. 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. ... and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

Let us remember how much Jesus suffered in His body during His passion. He was whipped, beaten, and a crown of thorns pierced His brow. His body experience utter exhaustion as He carried His cross to Calvary. They pierced His hands and His feet. The bread of communion should remind us of the body in which Jesus suffered.

Now in just a moment we will pass the plates which contain the bread. Take a piece; hold on to it. And as v.28 says, "but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." Spend some silent moments in prayer, thanking God for the gift of life. Examine your life in light of the great sacrifice of Christ for you. Confess your sins, receive forgiveness, and worship the Lord.

Prayer

Deacons pass out bread.

Read v.24 as the congregation eats together, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

4. You Have Received the Bread. That bread, in a very small way, will nourish your life. In a similar way, Jesus said in John 6:57, "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." Being a Christian is not just getting your sins forgiven. It is also living day by day with the strength that Christ gives, when we let Him live His life through us. Paul said in Gal. 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Col. 3:4 says "Christ...is our life...."

Are you relying upon the strength of the Lord to live each day?

Now during this memorial supper, we are also to remember:

B. The Shed Blood of Christ - Jesus said in the last of v.25, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The New Covenant refers back to Jer. 31:31-34. One main provision of that new covenant that Jesus mentions is, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34b; cf. Mt. 26:28). In this supper we are commanded to remember Jesus. But isn't it great that God does *not* remember our sins?

1. Christ's Blood Provides Forgiveness – Jesus said in Mt. 26:28, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Heb. 9:22 says, "and without *the* shedding of blood *there* is no forgiveness." Jesus said that He came to give His life a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28). Peter said that Christ died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

2. Now, Receive His Forgiveness. Would God's Spirit bring to your mind some sin that you have not yet confessed and received forgiveness for? Confess it now. John said that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7). Upon confession of sin, claim forgiveness offered in the New Covenant. It is your assurance of acceptance and righteousness before God.

Prayer

Deacons pass out juice

Read Mt. 26:27-28 and lead in receiving the juice, "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'"

3. Offer Forgiveness to Others - If God has forgiven you, shouldn't you go and do likewise? In fact, Jesus said, "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Mt. 6:15).

Thus, we return full circle. My message began with an appeal to experience true communion and fellowship as believers. That is possible only through forgiveness. Who do you need to forgive today?

Extend invitation.

Hold hands and sing parting hymn.

Sources: C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Craig Blomberg, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2019; Oliver B. Greene, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Greenville: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1965); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937); John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Paige Patterson, *The Troubled Triumphant Church: an Exposition of First Corinthians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).