



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 11:17–26

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part IV”

1 Corinthians

TRANSCRIPT

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we again thank Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the Word of God concerning him, and we thank Thee that the Old Testament as well as the New Testament point to him. As he himself said regarding the Old Testament, “They are they which testify of me.” We thank Thee for the revelation of our Lord in the Old Testament, and we thank Thee for the apostles who have made so many of the passages of the Old Testament plain and clear to us and have pointed us to the Savior whose work is enshrined in the Old Testament by prophecy and be type.

We ask Thy blessing upon us as we study this evening. We pray that our thoughts may be guided by the Holy Spirit and that we may learn and profit and, by Thy grace, be more responsible servants of Thine. And enable us, Lord, to be more effective witnesses in our families, among our friends, and in the society in which Thou hast placed us. We pray for the whole church. We ask Thy blessing upon it. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon all who are here this evening. And we ask Thy blessing upon their families and their friends. And we pray especially for those who have requested the members of Believers Chapel to pray for them. We bring them before Thee, and ask that Thou art minister to them in a way that will be for their good and for the glory of our great triune God in heaven.

We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

[Message] This evening we are turning again to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and we are looking again at the passage in which the Apostle Paul has words to say concerning the Lord’s Supper as he wrote to the church in Corinth. I’m going to read verse 17 through 26 for the Scripture reading this evening. We’ll not quite cover the end of that, but basically look at the verses that we missed last week. Verse 17:

“Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 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. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. 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 and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”

We know, of course, from our study of the Bible, most of us in this audience at least, that the Lord’s Supper parallels its Old Testament type, the Passover. Both of them are memorials—memorials of deliverance and anticipations of future blessing. The Passover, a memorial of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the Egyptian bondage. The Lord’s Supper, a memorial of

the deliverance of the children of God from the guilt and penalty of sin by our Lord’s great Passover-type work which he accomplished on Calvary’s cross.

The apostle, as we’ve noticed several times, in Chapter 5 in verse 7 says “For Christ, our Passover has been sacrificed for you” or for us. So there are parallels between them. Both are memorials for deliverance and both of them are anticipations of future blessing because in the case of Israel, they were delivered from Egypt in order to be brought into the promised land which they enjoyed for a time. The Scriptures, I believe, make it very plain they will enjoy it more fully in the future.

In the case of the church of Jesus Christ, we in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper anticipate also the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ and the entrance and the fullness of the blessings that are ours by redemption. We have reference to that in verse 26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He come.”

The two feasts share another similarity. They were and are highlights of corporate worship. The one, the highlight of the corporate worship of Israel, the celebration of the Passover year after year, and in the case of the Christian church, the Lord’s Supper is the highlight of the worship of the Christian church. You know from reading the New Testament that in the early church, the Lord’s Supper was preeminently the celebration of the things that have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving work, and the church looked forward each week to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

For example, in Acts chapter 20 in verse 7 we read,

“Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”

One of those ideal situations in which preachers don’t have time limits. Don’t worry. We’re not going to go till midnight tonight. But, at least you can see from the language of Luke, the language suggests on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to hear a sermon?

No. To have fellowship with the fellow believers? No. All of the other things that so characterize the Christian Church today, other than the Lord’s Supper, are omitted. The reason they came together preeminently is to observe the Lord’s Supper.

Now, of course they observed the Lord’s Supper obviously in a meeting in which there was room for preaching, because we read that Paul continued preaching until midnight. So the meetings of the early church centered around the Lord’s Supper as the corporate worship. But there were meetings in which there was freedom for gifted men to expound the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit gave guidance.

So the point I want to be sure to make is that there’s a similarity between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper, and it’s extremely important for us to realize the importance the Passover had for Israel and also to know that the importance that the Lord’s Supper should have for us—should parallel the importance that the Passover had for Israel. It is, as I’ve mentioned previously, the only act of worship for which the Lord gave the church special direction. And therefore, in his mind, it was, it seems, extremely important.

If we do not observe the Lord’s Supper, if we do not pay attention to the Lord’s Supper, how can we stand before our Lord who has asked us “do this in remembrance of me”? Go on doing this in remembrance of me. I mention ahead of time, but we’ll mention it again later on perhaps when I’ve forgotten about what I’m saying now, but that “do” is a present imperative, and it could be rendered perhaps a little—with a little overemphasis “go on doing this in remembrance of me.” It’s something that is to continue to characterize the Christian church.

Now we turn to verse 17 and the Apostle is going to describe the indignation that he feels over what has been happening in Corinth, and it’s clear from these verses that the {*agape*}, that is the “love feast,” a term that is used of the meetings of the early church in Jude 12 and some other places. There was this {*agape*}, the love feast, the meetings of the church were characterized by disorderliness in Corinth. And so he says, “And now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come

together as a church,”—literally the Greek text says simply “in assembly,” but “as a church” is a pretty good rendering of it. When we come together in assembly as a church for our church meetings, Paul says, “I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.” The factions—we might render that word—factions.

Now, I think if we know anything about the history of the Christian Church, we know that factions are inevitable. The reason factions are inevitable is because we’re sinners. And even those who have been redeemed and are on the church rolls, they are still not fully redeemed. The Bible makes it very plain. Paul makes it very plain in Romans chapter 7, that the sin principle still dwells within us until we enter into the presence of the Lord. And so, as I look upon you tonight, I see a gathering of sinners, a gathering of people in whom the sin principle is at work.

Now, if you want some objective evidence. I look at you, and I remember how some of you looked twenty-five years ago. You don’t look like you did twenty-five years ago, and some of you, I know, I’ve known for longer than that. Some of you that I’ve known for forty years, you don’t look the same either. In fact, I’m worried about you. [Laughter] And you’re worried about me, too, I hope. Because the sin principle still dwells within us. It’s appointed unto sinners to die. That’s our destiny. The Fall in the Garden of Eden takes its toll down through the centuries. We cannot avoid it. We all face it. Some of us perhaps sooner than others, but no one really knows.

And so it was inevitable, Paul says, that factions would exist in the church. For there must also be factions among you that those are approved may be recognized among you.

In fact, the factions and the process of being approved by the way in which we respond to the problems of the local church is really an anticipation of a separation that is to occur at the judgment seat—well, at the great white throne judgment. There are people who are in ostensible fellowship with local churches that are not going to be in heaven. We know that. The Bible details that, too. Satan is very active in the Christian church seeking to overthrow the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so, consequently, he infiltrates the Christian churches. And if it’s a Christian church that is a fruitful church there will be some there that are not emissaries of our Lord

but are really emissaries of Satan. Paul talks about that in 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And he says “not only are they sitting in the pew, they’re standing by the pulpit.” As a matter of fact, the ones standing behind the pulpit are more dangerous and more likely to upset the church of God. And so Satan is very anxious to have one standing behind a pulpit, or standing behind this pulpit, too, for that matter. So he goes on to say, for—now he’s going to explain why he feels this; “Therefore, when you come together in one place, it’s not to eat the Lord’s Supper; these factions and these divisions that exist among you hinder the Lord’s Supper in its observance as it should be scripturally, for in eating each one of you takes his own supper ahead of the others and one is hungry and another is drunk.”

There’s a man by the name of Thiessen, German scholar, so his name may be pronounced “TE-sen.” But he has written a speculative article, but in it he has some points that I think you might appreciate because they tell you some of the possible backgrounds of the church there. He makes the point he believes that there are two groups in the church: the wealthy and the poor. And that possibly explains the differences that exist between the individuals in the church and that is responsible for the divisions. He also makes the claim that the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine were two separate acts: one at the beginning of the meal, one at the end. Most scholars feel that that’s probably not true, but that’s part of what he feels from the study of these particular passages.

And then verse 21. Verse 21 reads, “For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” This suggests to Professor Thiessen that during the meal each took his own food, and that it signifies during the actual communal meal, the Lord’s Supper, the Love Feast, that the rich shared some of what they brought to the meeting but did not share all. And so, consequently, it was not totally a meeting in which they all shared together everything that they brought. And that was perhaps one of the reasons for the disorder, the factions, as he mentions.

And then also he suggests that that was, therefore, perhaps a distinction in the quality of the food, the rich bringing the meat, the fish, and other delicacies, and the poor the kind of food that

wouldn’t be the kind of food that the rich would like. And so our Lord’s instructions through the Apostle Paul are very apropos for a church in which there were divisions, in which there was a failure to recognize that while our status in our society may be different: there are rich, there are poor, there are the middle class—administration tells us they are the ones that are not going to have to be taxed so much now—but anyway, we just know, after all Matthew could give us a great deal of information about tax gathering in his day. But the church was composed probably of some who were wealthy and some who were very, very, poor. And perhaps as a result of that, the factions had arisen and the apostle is very disturbed about it. He is very indignant about it, actually.

It’s really something that we have to think about, too, in the Christian church today because in our Christian churches there is an opportunity for the same kind of divisions to arise. And the way in which we treat one another and the way in which we recognize the economic statuses that each of us live in and which are different from others. But now coming to verse 23 he reviews the past instruction that had been given by the Lord. He says, “For I receive that from the Lord that which I also deliver to you.” Now the “for” in verse 23 justifies his rebuke that he has just made—“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread.”

Now, the text that I read when it said “betrayed”—that word is a word that means literally “handed-over.” My text, the Authorized Version, this is the New King James Version, but it is a modification of that, looks only at Judas. But we know, of course, when our Lord was turned over, he was turned over not simply by Judas, he was also turned over by the Lord God in heaven as well.

In Isaiah chapter 53 in verse 10 the prophet writes these words which pertain to our Lord’s death directly. For the prophet writes in verse 10, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief.”

Our Lord was given over to the cross by the world about him. He was given over to the cross by those that were his enemies, by the leaders in Israel and the leaders among the Gentiles, but back of all of that we know was the work of the Lord God in sovereign control of all of the

circumstances. So we need to remember that although when he says that the “that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread;” appears to have primarily in his mind Judas’ action and the betrayal of the Lord Jesus. Then he says in verse 24, “and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.””

Now, I mentioned last week, maybe the week before, that I wanted to mention some of the different theories that have been given regarding the Lord’s Supper because we all encounter this if we enter, for example, a Roman Catholic society. They have ideas that are contrary to most Protestants concerning the things that are signified when the Lord Jesus says “this is My body which is broken for you,” or “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”

There are different interpretations of this that have a great deal to do with the history of the Christian church. And then in Protestantism, there are differing viewpoints as well. Those who are Reformed Presbyterian churches have one interpretation of this, and then those who are un-Reformed generally have another interpretation. In fact, in the Reformed family there was a differing interpretation in the time of the Reformation. Zwingli, the reformer in Zurich, John Calvin, the reformer in Geneva, differed over the interpretation of the meaning of these texts. “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you.” And both of them, of course, rejected the viewpoints of the Roman Catholics. But not only was there a difference between, in the Reformed family, between Zwingli and Calvin, the Reformed family differed from the Lutheran reformation, Luther’s interpretation.

So we really have four different types of interpretation of what our Lord’s meal words mean. The Roman Catholics, of course, have taken the view, as I mentioned previously, that when our Lord said, “Take, eat; this is My body,” that by transubstantiation, that is the key word, it is mentioned in the Council in Trent, the interpretation that they put upon it, by the priests’ words the bread and the wine are transformed into the body and blood of our Lord. And so when a person in the Roman Catholic Church is given the wafer by the priest, he is given our Lord’s body.

Now, those who worship in the Reformed—in the Catholic Church, as you know, are not allowed to partake of the wine. But in the case of the wafer, that is the body of Christ, the wine is the blood of Christ by transubstantiation, through the action of the priest who, they believe, in accordance with the teaching of their understanding of the Word of God, has transformed the elements. So the transubstantiation has taken place as I’ve suggested to you. The act of consecration itself determines that our Lord’s real presence exists in the wafer and in the wine.

Now, we have sought to maintain that the verb “is,” the verb “to be” that is used here, the Greek word {*einai*} is a word that more than once in the New Testament—in fact, often—has a sense that could be called the symbolic sense. It often means “to signify.” I referred you to a passage in Matthew 13 where our Lord, in one of his parables, says about the preaching of the Word: the field is the word—world. The field signifies the world.

For example in John chapter 8 in verse 12, we read these words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, “I am the light of the world.” Now, our Lord is not the light of the world in the sense that we think of the light as being something of substance. He is the Son of God, and his work is significantory of the light of the world.

In John 10 in verse 9, we read these words, “I am the door.” Well, our Lord is not the door. These are ways by which in symbol or in figure our Lord is expressing spiritual truth. In other passages the same is true. I mentioned Revelation—well, I didn’t mention Revelation 1:20. Perhaps we should mention Revelation chapter 1, verse 20, when John is giving some interpretative words. We read,

“The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, (this is the vision of Christ in the first chapter) and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

The plain meaning is “signify,” not are in the sense of being substantially the same. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in verse 4, we read “and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.”—signifies Christ, he would want to say.

So the Roman Catholic viewpoint is then the viewpoint of transubstantiation. It’s kind of an inconsistency in forbidding the blood to the laity, but yet allowing the laity to eat the bread, to take the wafer. Roman Catholics refer to John chapter 6 in verse 53 in order to justify that particular thing. In John 6 in verse 53 we read these words: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.’”

Verse 56, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

So in the light of that, why is not the Roman Catholic position correct? Well, in the case of those passages that we referred to, it’s very plain, again, that he is talking about symbol and figure. As I say, Rome regards the sacrifice of the Mass as a propitiatory offering on the altar by which sins are removed. Eucharistic communion follows. So that in a Roman Catholic Church, you must attend Mass if your daily sins are to be forgiven. There is an offering, a continued offering of our Lord Jesus Christ Sunday after Sunday, Lord’s Day after Lord’s Day. We don’t criticize at all the fact that they seek to have the Mass on every Sunday because I think that’s a reflection of the practice of the early Church. But what it has come to mean is something entirely different.

How can we possibly partake of bread and wine and consider them the body and blood of our Lord? It was a big problem when it was first announced the doctrine of the Church. Cardinal Neumann said to Alexander White, a friend and Presbyterian minister in the city of Edinburgh, the substance of the bread and wine are converted into the substance of the very flesh and blood of Christ.

Now, the appearances are different. The technical term used for appearances in these controversies is the accidents. Appearances remain. The accidents remain. The bread still has the same shape. It has the same size. It has the same color. It even tastes the same. But after the

consecration by the priest, it’s different. But we are to deny our senses, so we are told. Cyril of Jerusalem said, quote, “Judge not by the taste but by faith.” In other words, we take the bread, we eat the bread, it tastes like bread, it looks like bread, it has the color of bread, it may have been bought at Mrs. Baird’s Bread, I don’t know—that’s not really the kind of bread you use, but it’s bread. But we are to deny that it is what it seems to be and regard it as the body of Christ.

Now, it wouldn’t be so bad, were it not for what the Roman Catholic Church says about those who do not teach this. I give you one of their words. “A curse rests upon those who do not receive the teaching of Council of Trent on this point.” In fact, at the Lateran Council at 1215, it was stated that “there is no salvation outside a church which teaches this.” And so those of you who attend another church than the Roman Catholic Church, you do not have salvation. No salvation exists in churches outside of the Roman Catholic Church, according to their doctrine.

Now, if you talk to a Roman Catholic, he wouldn’t understand that. He may even have ministers or priests in his church who say, “Well, we don’t believe that anymore.” But it’s still in their doctrinal statements. And some will say, “Well, Vatican II some years ago we changed a lot of that, admitted there were certain things we didn’t want to do. We changed certain things.” But it still in the doctrinal statement. They did not say, “We renounce the Council of Trent.” It’s still there.

The forgiveness of sins does not occur by reason of what Christ did on Calvary’s cross alone, but one also must follow the sacramental system. And go to the Mass and the other sacraments must be observed as well, all of them, also our sins—sin forgiving. It’s as if the Roman Catholic Church would like to finish the unfinished work—should I—let me put it this way: to finish the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. His work is finished, but they, by their doctrine, are continually trying to finish the work that has been finished by the Lord Jesus.

Now, the passage that Rome depends heavily upon, John 6, is a passage I just read, but verse 35 of John chapter 6 says that our Lord said, “I am the bread of life.” And it mentions also some other things that suggest that what he is talking about is a symbolic reference, figures of speech. If coming to him is the end of hunger and believing in him satisfies thirst, as he says, then coming and

believing are eating and drinking, because that’s what we want to receive, those things that figure in the form that he’s speaking about, the forgiveness of our sins. He was speaking spiritually. He wasn’t speaking figuratively or sacramentally.

Incidentally, Rome permits the communicants to receive only the bread of communion. The cup is kept for the priests. Isn’t that interesting? In other words, if it’s really true that the bread is the body of our Lord and the wine is the blood of our Lord, then why are not those who are ordinary people allowed to partake of both? You would think that they would be forced to by their own doctrine.

Well, the cup was banned but kept for the priests at the Council of Constance in 1414 and confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1546. So Rome answers the questions that arise by saying we have another doctrine. We have the doctrine of concomitance: that is, when you take the bread, you are taking both the bread and the wine. That, now, by doctrine. So we don’t have to take the wine. If you take the bread, you have by concomitance have partaken the wine as well.

Now, again, Trent says, “If anyone denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each species and under every particle of either when separated, let him be anathema.” Why deny the wine? What is there that lies back of the denial of the wine? They will naturally ask that question. They have replied, “Well, there is a danger of spilling it. The danger to health from partaking of a chalice touched by infected lips.”

There is something to that, you know. Years ago when I studied in Europe, I attended a little church in which we had one pitcher in which the wine was, and it was passed around in the congregation. There were about, I would say, 100 people that attended every Sunday, observed the Lord’s Supper every Sunday morning. And if you’ve lived or been in Scotland in the wintertime it’s rather chilly, and the wind is high. It’s constantly wet, and the Scots, by reason of the temperature, have got bronchial troubles all the time. Another problem is, you see them running around the street with just a—just a scarf, that’s all, no coat. And then you wonder, “Well, why do they have problems?” Well, it’s very plain. But at any rate, when you enter the congregation, throughout the

whole service of the hour, people are coughing. Cough, cough. And then we had to partake of the one pitcher of wine. It took a little bit of courage, you know, to go ahead and take the wine. I think I can understand what lies back of this, but it just doesn’t make sense so far as the truth is concerned, the danger of spilling it, the difficulty of preserving the sacrament under the species of wine, the danger to health from partaking of the chalice touched by infected lips. I think I can understand that.

But you see what it really is, it’s an improvement of our Lord’s teaching. He didn’t say do that. He said when you take the bread and you take the wine, we are to take it. We trust him. And we do what he says. The result of the whole matter, of course, is the worship of the elements, because that’s precisely what is done. They worship the elements, and that makes the whole thing idolatry.

Now, the Lutheran church has a slightly different view. The Lutherans—Martin Luther himself felt that the bread and wine were not specifically the body and blood of our Lord, but our Lord was in, with, and under those elements. And so the Lutheran position has generally been called consubstantiation. It has not taken on with the rest of the Protestant world, but that has basically been the Lutheran position, and the Lutherans did deny what the Roman Catholics set forth.

The Calvinists had two different views. John Calvin felt our Lord was spiritually present in the Lord’s Supper by the power of the Holy Spirit so that when a person takes the bread and takes the wine, he feeds upon our Lord Jesus Christ. And our Lord at the right hand of the Father through the Holy Spirit ministers to us out of his body and blood.

Now, of course, the reference is to him as having been brought to the right hand of the throne of God, but he feels that Christ is spiritually present and we spiritually receive blessing from the Lord Jesus himself as we feed upon the elements, which are references to his body and to his blood.

Well, Ulrich Zwingli, the Zurich reformer, believed that the elements are simply memorials. And, generally speaking, in evangelicalism that is predominantly the viewpoint that that dominates today when the elements are taken. Most of the evangelicals today—most of the Protestant evangelicals believe that what we are doing is really essentially remembering what our Lord has done

in his saving work. I tend myself to feel that there is something in what John Calvin says. That is, when we partake of the elements, there is a ministry from the Lord Jesus himself that we receive by virtue of his spiritual presence in our meetings and the ministry of himself to us as we partake of the elements. That’s why I think it’s important for us—one of the reasons why I think it’s important for us to attend the Lord’s Supper and to observe the Lord’s Supper and receive from him the spiritual ministry that is promised.

The two things, however, the body—the bread and the wine are designed as a kind of parable of fate having to do with his body and blood, and together they teach, I must die sacrificially.

Now, Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of me.” This is a command. It is compulsory. And as I mentioned, it is to be frequent. Go on doing this in remembrance of me. If you go back to the early church and look at the history of the early church, you cannot help but think that this was important to them. Listen to what Luke says with reference to the meetings in Jerusalem. He said in verse 42 of chapter 2, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.” Now, there are just three things here, the fellowship is to find as the breaking of bread and prayers, so they continued in biblical doctrine. That’s the first and most important thing, the teaching of the Word of God. But then in the fellowship of the breaking of bread, the Lord’s Supper, and prayers those three things characterize the early church. Biblical teaching, the observation of the Lord’s Supper, and their prayers, those three important things.

In verse 46, I should have read verse 46 also. Verse 46 we read, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” So they thought of this as an expression of our Lord’s love for them, what he left them reminding them what he had done, and they responded—and they responded not by saying, We’ve got to go to the Lord’s Supper, but they did it with gladness and simplicity. Why should it not be something that we look forward to? To come to the Lord’s Table, to remember our Lord and receive from him the blessing of the ministry, his spiritual ministry of our hearts as we remember him and reflect upon what he has done for us.

If you read the Old Testament, what I read last year, as many of you know, read through the Old Testament three times, one of the things that impressed me was this very fact that Israel so constantly fell backwards and forgot the Lord. Over and over, our Lord speaks that way. You have forgotten me, and the same attitude is an attitude in which we so easily fall ourselves, to forget him. Do this, go on doing this in remembrance of me.

And then in verse 25, “In the same manner also he took the cup,” Paul says, “after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” Everything, in a sense, in our Lord’s ministry led to this very moment. If you will look back at the story of the Word of God from its beginning, Genesis chapter 3 and the promise of the Redeemer to come, and then the steps of the Old Testament so filled with various ways, inclusive of the Passover as a high point of the ways by which the ministry of the Lord Jesus was anticipated, it was designed to reach its climax in the sacrifice of Calvary. And so the observance of the Lord’s Supper is that placed at the center of the worship of the Christian church, because it’s by what Christ did there on Calvary that we stand as forgiven sinners in the family of God.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Everything in the ministry led to that which this represents. The atonement is no afterthought. The atonement is that towards which the whole Old Testament revelation is pointed, our Lord’s death on Calvary’s cross. What he means by this cup is the new covenant in my blood is simply this cup is the new covenant, and it has cost my blood. That’s the point.

In the Old Testament, of course, when Moses was—gave Israel the law, the Old Testament is filled, of course, with “thou shalt.” And the Law of Moses sets forth the thou shalt so plainly over and over again: thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not. But the new covenant, as we mentioned I think two weeks ago, the new covenant is characterized by “I will.” Those numerous I wills in Jeremiah chapter 31 in verse 31 through verse 34 set the difference between the Old Testament imposition of the law to bring men to the knowledge of their sin, Paul tells us in other

places, the new covenant is that which describes beautifully the sovereign determination of God to bless his people. I will, I will, I will. Their sins and iniquities finally I will remember no more.

Incidentally, need we remind ourselves that Jesus partook of neither the bread nor the cup? That’s not an accident. In fact, the way Luke, in his account, describes the Lord’s Supper makes it even plainer. Verse 17 of Luke chapter 22, “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide *it* among yourselves.” Divide it among yourselves. He does not partake. He doesn’t need to partake. He’s the one of whom the wine speaks, of course.

Now, in verse 26 our final text, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” This word “proclaim,” is very interesting because this is the word that the apostle uses back in chapter 2 verse 1. In chapter 2 verse 1 he says, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.”

In chapter 9 in verse 14 he has used it again, “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” Let’s just take that word “preach” and read that. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you preach the Lord’s death till he comes.

Every time the members of Believers Chapel Sunday evenings sit around the Lord’s Table, observe the Lord’s Table, it is an evangelistic service, evangelistic service. You proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. I’m not saying that’s the primary stress of it, but that’s what he says. He preached it. You proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Many years ago I was associated with another church in Dallas. It was called Believers Chapel. It’s the church from which we took the name. After they abandoned the name, we took it. We thought they dropped the best name that one could have for a church, Believers Chapel. It’s where believers gather. It’s not a building. It’s a people, actually. Where the believers gather.

Anyway, they had a young people’s conference, and I was there on the night they had the bonfire the last night, and they were giving testimony. And I had attended the Sunday morning Lord’s Supper. In those days at that church they observed the supper in the morning at eleven

o’clock. And some people came in and their parents observed the Lord’s Supper but the children, at least one, maybe more, sat on the back row because the elders were not going to give them the Lord’s Supper. They knew they were not believers. Their parents had said that, so, therefore, they sat back. And when the bread and wine were passed, they were not given the bread and wine.

Well, I was out for the bonfire—I think it was on Friday night—and they were giving testimony—all the kids were giving testimony what the week had meant to them. And I have forgotten—I said a minute ago 40 years, didn’t I? It was about 50 years. So my memory is not clear. Maybe Howard Prier, he was probably there; he’s an old man, too. [Laughter]. And I’ve forgotten whether it was a girl or boy, but that person stood up and gave a testimony, said, “When I came to Dallas”—(they had come from some other town. I’ve forgotten whether it was Texas or Oklahoma) “When I came to Dallas, I was not a Christian but I attended the Lord’s Supper meeting Sunday morning where the bread and wine were passed, and I sat back, and I realized that I was not a Christian by observing the Lord’s Supper and being forced to sit back.” And then went on to speak that how during the week when the gospel was preached that he or she had become a believer in Jesus Christ.

There’s a wonderful story by Dr. Ironside, and I—I think I’ve got about eight minutes—because we started a little late—to tell. There was a Japanese man who came to some—got to know Dr. Ironside in his ministry in California. And Dr. Ironside was located in San Francisco, but he frequently—he frequently would preach around. And he was preaching in Sacramento, and he became acquainted with a Japanese man by the name Yamaguchi. His first name I know in other accounts of this which Dr. Ironside gave, was Yataro Yamaguchi. And he attended some of the meetings in Sacramento. And he was troubled about his soul, but it seemed impossible to bring him to Christ because of his love for money.

He would say, “If I accept this Jesus as my Savior, I don’t see how I can make money.”

So we told him, Dr. Ironside said, that he’d have to choice of being rich on earth or poor in eternity and poor in eternity or poor on earth and rich in heaven. And he said, “When I use the word

“we”—they had a Japanese evangelist, Christian evangelist who also worked in the church in Sacramento.

And the Japanese man was very much concerned but, nevertheless, nothing happened. And he said he came back for meetings and he happened to see him. And at the close of the meeting, Mr. Yamaguchi came up to him and said, “I so glad to see you again.”

And Dr. Ironside says, I said, “So am I glad to see you. Have you accepted Christ as your savior yet?”

Tears filled his eyes, and he said, “No, I fight against him. I cannot give up. If I accept him, I cannot make money. Do you have some meetings here where you’re speaking?”

And Dr. Ironside said, “Yes.” And he told him where the meetings were being held.

And he said, “Do you have a meeting on Sunday morning where you eat the bread and drink the wine showing how Jesus died?”

And Dr. Ironside said, “Yes, next Sunday morning.”

“I come,” Dr. Yamaguchi said.

So on Sunday morning we had gathered together to participate in the Lord’s Supper, and as the meeting commenced, this Japanese man came in, and he sat close up front. “I was praying that God might speak to him,” Ironside said. And as the meeting went on, it was evident that he was greatly perturbed. Finally, the people of—finally the people of God partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine, and this heathen Japanese sat and looked on.

Just as the elements were replaced on the table he rose and said, “I like to pray.”

Dr. Ironside thought, “My, I wish I had told him he would not be expected to take part in the meeting.

But he prayed like this, “O God, I all broke up. For one whole year I fight you. I fight you hard. Your spirit break me all to pieces. O God, today I see your people eating the bread, drinking the wine, tell how Jesus died for sinners like me. O God, you love me so you give your Son to die to me. I cannot fight you anymore. I give up. I take him as my Savior.

Ironside said, “He didn’t spoil the meeting at all, to have him to take part in such a prayer as that. We realize that this was—that this simple audience—this simple ordinance had preached to him, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do preach the Lord’s death till he come.

At the close of the meeting, we gathered around him to rejoice with him. And he turned to me and said, Jesus say before we go away, when you believe him, you bury in water, show old life gone, new life begin. I like bury.” That’s the way Ironside said it, “I like bury.”

“You want to be baptized, I asked,” Dr. Ironside said. “Well, I will see you during the week, and perhaps we can do it next Sunday.

Referring to the Japanese evangelist, Mr. Yamaguchi said, “A year ago he tells me Jesus Christ coming back again. No?”

“Yes,” I said, “that’s true. He’s coming soon.”

He said, “He coming soon?”

“He may,” Dr. Ironside said.

“He not come before next Sunday?” [Laughter]

“Well, I couldn’t say. He might come before then.”

“Then I no like to wait till Sunday. I like show no fight anymore. I like be buried today.”

I said, “Forgive me for trying to put it off. We will go down to the river this afternoon.” So in the afternoon he came dressed in his best with a Japanese mayor. The Japanese mayor is the richest Japanese in the community. It’s called a Japanese mayor. With 40 other Japanese merchants behind him. We preached the Word. He gave his testimony, and then he was buried in the waters of baptism. The Lord’s Supper had been the means—one of the means by which he had brought to the knowledge of the Lord.

You know, we—we sometimes think that what we do in Believers Chapel is something that is not done—not recognized as being done in other places, and even some suggesting that it ought not to be done. Let me just point out to you that the idea that we observe the Lord’s Supper every Sunday is not a new idea. Look at Roman Catholic Church. They observe the Mass. That’s a genuine

tradition, the observance from the days of the apostles. But let me read you some of the things that outstanding Christians have said. I think I’ve got time do this.

John Calvin, the great Swiss Reform Presbyterian leader, said, “The supper should be observed very frequently and at least once in every week,” in *The Institutes*, the greatest theological work of reformers.

The Methodists, John Wesley led the early societies in the observance every Sunday.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, wrote, “Shame on the Christian church that she should put it off to once a month. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord’s day, celebrating his supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons.”

I. Howard Marshall is Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen, today one of the outstanding evangelical Christian scholars. This is what Professor Marshall has said not too long ago. “The church stands under obligation to celebrate the supper.” And then he adds the words, “In line with what appears to be the practice of the early church in the New Testament, the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated frequently in the church, and there is good reason for doing so on each Lord’s day.”

There are people who say we shouldn’t do it because the Bible does not command it. Well, actually, the Bible does not say we’re not to do it either, does it? The Bible says, do—go on doing this in remembrance of me. The apostles observed it every Sunday. Would not that seem to be the best interpretation of what was meant by do this in remembrance of me? Their interpretation of this do is to observe it Sunday after Sunday. This would be legalism, some say. It’s not legalistic to obey the Word of God.

Now, if we obey the Word of God by a sense of gaining merit thereby, that’s true. We don’t do that. We observe it out of gladness and thankfulness and gratitude for what Jesus Christ has done.

Or, it makes the supper too common. Nothing could be more foolish than an objection like that. It makes it more common to observe it frequently, and thus the supper becomes common.

What people will do to gain an excuse. What I always say to them is this: If by observing it frequently it makes it common, what about prayer? Should we therefore only pray occasionally? If we pray constantly and frequently, as the Bible exhorts us to do, does that make prayer common? Oh, no it’s silly.

Well, our time is up. I wish I could labor this point a little bit more, but let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for Thy Word and we ask Thy blessing upon it. That which has been in harmony with Thy will, we pray that Thou wilt bless. That which has not been in harmony with it, take from our minds. We give Thee thanks for him who gave himself for us and now has marvelously given us this feast in which we feed upon him and are strengthened at every observance of it.

We pray in his name. Amen.