

## The Centrality of the Supper November 28, 2017

Luke chapter twenty-two, verse twenty-four: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Then verse number 28. "But ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations"—or my trials—"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee..." And then verse thirty-five, "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said unto them. But now, he that hath a purse let him take it", and so on.

So all that was present at the very first occasion when the Lord instituted the supper. We see that there was rivalry, there was the exposure of the human heart. There was a focus on the future. There was preparation for service. All of that was involved in the very first occasion that the supper was instituted. In the gospels we have the institution of the supper. In the Acts we have the implementing of the supper and in Corinthians we have the instructions concerning the supper. We're going to look at First Corinthians now, chapter ten first of all, First Corinthians chapter ten, verse sixteen. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion"—our participation, our fellowship—"of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Now look down to chapter eleven. It's of interest to consider that since First Corinthians was written before the gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke, First Corinthians was probably the first recorded information concerning the Lord's supper. Believers would have had First Corinthians in their hands before they had Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So that when Paul says, 'I received it of the Lord,' he received it from the Lord directly, and recorded it, and it is without all of the historical background that Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide. This would have been chronologically, time-wise, the first recorded truth relative to the breaking of bread and the Lord's supper. Now look at verse seventeen. We'll take time to read it. I know it's very familiar. "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one take it before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you. That the

Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed"—or the same night in which he was being betrayed—"took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do ye, in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he at supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." And here are some of the chastenings that occurred, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Now that will probably be more than sufficient for us to to look at this evening in considering the centrality of the Lord's supper. Just a few things, maybe just as a background, to dispel misunderstandings that have arisen over the centuries relative to the Lord's supper. It hardly needs to be said that when we gather to remember the Lord Jesus and we take of the emblems, it has nothing to do with what was commonly taught for many centuries, either *transubstantiation*, or another word, I think Martin Luther kind of hedged a bit, called *consubstantiation*, the idea that somehow the body and blood of Christ become infused into the emblems, into the bread and into the cup. It hardly needs to be said. But also, confusion exists in the evangelical world, That somehow that partaking of the emblems is what's called a means of grace that somehow you become a better Christian, and that by partaking of the emblems you're actually somehow experiencing something very spiritual. And of course that's that's not it either. Because we're going to be looking at symbols, so that we have to understand not only is the truth of of transubstantiation wrong, not only is the notion of a 'means of grace' wrong, but any idea that in those emblems are types is also wrong. Those who preach that the bread and cup are types begin to stress that we have to use unleavened bread, because if it's a type of the body of Christ, so it can't have any leaven in it, and so on.

But we have to remember that all types and all symbols were done away at Calvary. There are no more types, and no more shadows.

We're left with five symbols. Symbols are different from types. Symbols just proclaim a particular truth. The symbols we have in the new testament include a body of water, for baptism; the long hair of a sister; a covered head of a sister; a cup of wine; and a loaf of bread. Five symbols for this dispensation. All of which declare tremendous truths. If you think of it, in those five symbols are portrayed or depicted cardinal truths of the Christian faith. In the bread, we have the Lord's incarnation, and we have a sacrifice. In the cup we have his death. In baptism, we have his death and resurrection. In the covered head of the sisters, we have his headship in coming glory. So all of

these symbols are proclaiming different truths that we hold very dear and that are cardinal truths relative to the word of God. That's just to clear away a few things that have been built up over the centuries relative to the emblems, and the fact that they are merely symbols that we have that are given to us to remember the Lord. So we want to speak now about the remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

I think, first of all, that it is an incredible thing to think of the simplicity that marks us as we gather to remember the Lord Jesus. Most men, and countries as well, when their desire is to commemorate a hero, or to remember some great deed, they usually erect a great monument. In England, you have Lord Admiral Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square. And we have our statues all across the country of Washington and Grant and other great heroes of American history, men to whom we give appreciation. Men to whom we give deserving honor because of what they have done for the country. I was just reading recently (I've never been there, but I'd like to get there some day) that near Flanders Field in Belgium, in the city of Ypres, since 1928, every night at 8 p.m., they do the very same thing. They sound the last post in honor of the British soldiers who died defending that city during World War I. They have an elaborate ceremony every night at 8 p.m. to honor, to remember, to call to remembrance, and they they read out the list of names. And at times great dignitaries are there and great ceremonies are done. Since 1928, every night they've been doing the same thing because they're calling to remembrance those who died heroically to save them.

We have just a loaf of bread. And a cup.

It's so insightful into the humility and the grace of the Lord Jesus. He would take emblems that have absolute availability throughout the entire globe. There's there's no place on earth where there is not something that is bread-like and a cup. These are the simplest of emblems, and the most available. It is so typical of his humility, and of his grace: he would not have an elaborate ceremony. He would not have some great pomp and circumstance concerning remembering him. It's just in absolute simplicity that we gather to remember the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let me just then if I can try to communicate a number of things. First of all, the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in the Lord's supper is a declaration of our faith and of our hope. We are declaring—proclaiming—the Lord's death until he comes. Virtually every place in the New Testament that that word ye do show, ye do proclaim, virtually every place that it is used, it is used for an oral, public proclamation of truth. So we are proclaiming the Lord's death as men rise to their feet to lead the assembly in worship, and as hymns of praise are sung. We are declaring to the universe this tremendous truth of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. 'Ye do proclaim the Lord's death till he come.' So we are gathering, not to get something, not to somehow become more spiritual because we're partaking of the emblems; we are coming together to remember the Lord and to proclaim his death to an onlooking universe. Some people sometimes ask, who are we proclaiming it to? We're pro-

claiming it to the universe, even if people are indifferent to and ignorant of it. But we're still proclaiming it. We're telling it forth. And so we are gathered together and we have symbols, as we've already mentioned, that we have before us to call to remembrance the Lord Jesus.

But now again bear with me please. These are very simple things primarily for the sake of younger believers.

There are two emblems, not one: a loaf and a cup. Why two? And why separate? I mean, wouldn't it have been enough just to have a cup, his blood that was shed for us? That would have spoken of his death. Wouldn't just a cup have been enough, or wouldn't just a loaf have been enough? His body given, a sacrifice. Why two? Why separate? What's involved? Just a few things to suggest. Number one, when body and blood are separated, that's death, isn't it. When blood is separated from body, that's death.

But also, it gives us insight into the vastness of Calvary's work. First of all, you need a body to suffer, and you shed blood when you die. Christ both suffered for sins and he died. One is judicial: he died. The other is moral: he paid for sin. So you have him suffering, and you have him dying. Suffering in his body, shedding his blood, and dying. But also, when he shed his blood, he shed his blood for my sins. His body was given not just for what I did, but for what I am. In his body, he took my place in God's sight, and God says, I am done with with AJ Higgins. He's out of sight anymore. So, he died for what I have done. That's my sins. That's his blood. He died for what I am. That is his body that was given. So we have both those things. What I did, what I am, my sins and myself are in the two emblems that are before us, as well.

But the cup also has another significance. We read of it in Luke chapter twenty-two. We read of it here in First Corinthians chapter eleven. It is the cup of the new covenant. A new covenant. Now just bear with me again for some background. There are four major covenants that God made that he takes full responsibility for. Now we're putting aside the covenant he made with Israel, called the Law, that Israel had to keep, which they failed to do. We're looking at four covenants God has made that are totally his responsibility. First of all, there was a covenant with Noah. Then there was a covenant with Abraham. Then there was a covenant with David. Then there is this covenant called the new covenant. The covenant with Noah involves the entire earth, with Noah, with every creeping thing, up through the entire globe; all of mankind is under the protection of the covenant made with Noah, that God would not destroy the earth again with a flood. The covenant with Abraham was made with with a nation—the nation of Israel. The covenant with David was made with just one family.

And the new covenant is made with believers. It is made with us. We are under the under the blessings of the new covenant, and of course God will confirm it with Israel when they are restored in a coming day.

Now the covenant with Noah guaranteed a habitation: 'I will never again destroy the earth.' The earth is preserved. It guaranteed a habitation. The covenant that he made with Abraham guaranteed a homeland: 'This land is yours.' This is where you're going to be. The covenant with David guaranteed an heir: 'One of your seed will sit upon the throne.' So a habitation; a homeland; an heir. But there was one big problem, and that's what the new covenant addressed. You see, none of those covenants dealt with the ultimate problem. You know what the ultimate problem is? Our hearts. He says, 'I will write my law in their hearts and in their minds.' So the new covenant has dealt with the problem of our hearts, our sin, and on the basis of that covenant, God will be able to fulfill all of his other covenantal promises to Abraham, to Abraham's seed, to David, and to all of us. So, those four major covenants.

Now, all of those covenants were given a sign. Noah's covenant? A sign in the sky, the bow without an arrow, telling of peace, rather than storm. The covenant with Abraham was given the sign of circumcision. The covenant with Israel was given the sabbath. That's why it has nothing to do with us. It was the sign of the covenant God made with Israel under the Law. Sabbath-keeping was their sign. The sign with David is not quite as clear, but he does say on two occasions, in Psalm 89 and again in Jeremiah 33, that you see the moon: if you can take the moon out of the sky, if you can change the sun and the moon, then I'll break my covenant with David.

And the sign of the new covenant? It's a cup: 'This is the new covenant.' So that we take that cup on a Lord's Day morning. Now we're going to see that both the bread and the cup have several meanings, several several things to teach us, and one of those things is, that what we are doing when we take the cup on the Lord's day morning is, we are confessing that every blessing is from God. It's a cup of blessing. That's what we read about in First Corinthians chapter ten. It's a cup of blessing. Every blessing we will ever enjoy is on the basis of that blood. Nothing to do with us.

So as you take that cup you're not just taking a sip of something and recognizing he died for you. We are conscious that every blessing, all the covenantal blessings of God that I will enjoy eternally, all rest solely upon what that cup speaks of, his blood shed for me upon the cross. So we are reminded of the of the declaration of what we are doing on a Lord's day.

What you think of his blood being shed and the covenantal blessings? It reminds you of two things. Number one, what he took away: this is the cup of the new covenant, which is shed for the remission of sins. 'I am putting sins away by this blood.' But it's also the cup of the new covenant. It also tells us what he brought in, and what he brings in is always greater than what he takes away. That's God's way. Whenever God takes something away and bring something else in, what he brings in is always greater. And what he brought in in blessing is far greater than what he took away in taking away our sins. So the cup speaks of what he's taken away and what he has brought in and what we

enjoy now. So it is a declaration of our faith, and a declaration of our hope.

It also is a display of our obedience. 'This do in remembrance of me.' Now there really were two commands. And I sometimes think we major on one, and we minor on the other. The Lord Jesus Christ gave two commands in the upper room. One we're fairly good at keeping, 'This do in remembrance of me.' But he gave another command. The other command was to love one another. And we do the first, because we can visibly do it. And people say were obeying it. Tragically, we fail to do the second many times, in loving one another as we ought to. But here, at least, we're dealing with the first, not with love one for another. We're dealing with a display of our obedience. It had as its origin, 'I received this from the Lord.' This is not optional. This is not a mere ceremony that Paul has instituted, or that the church fathers brought together. This is something that came from him, and the wording of First Corinthians chapter eleven is most significant, 'The night in which he was being betrayed...' While Judas was out, finalizing his deal, his nefarious deed with the leaders of the nation, the Lord Jesus was taking bread and taking a cup.

Now, you may say, well, what's the significance there? The significance there is that he was thinking of us. He was actually thinking of us while men were plotting his death. He was looking down through the ages, and he wanted to to keep affections warm. He wanted to keep hopes alive. And so he instituted a very simple remembrance that we might do so. So we have its origin, and we have its order. It's the only assembly meeting where the order is given to us. The bread. And then the cup.

It's the only Assembly meeting we're told what day, the first day of the week. Now it's very likely (especially if you read Acts chapter twenty and some other portions), it's very likely (and we're not going to hold people to doing this) but very likely everything that believers did in the first century, maybe even in the second, they did on the first day of the week. And they did it at night. A large number were slaves. They didn't have the option of having Monday night off for a meeting or Tuesday night off for a meeting. They would have just maybe a Sunday night. And they would gather together. And they would probably break bread at night. And then they would have ministry, teaching (Paul preached until midnight), and they would likely have had an opportunity for prayer. So that was probably all gathered together into one occasion. But nevertheless, the breaking of bread, we're told the order of the meeting, and we're told the day of the meeting.

Maybe I shouldn't do this, because some may think we're way off line. Turn to chapter fourteen for just a minute if you will. And this is just a kind of a side track for just a moment. Some may say well why do we sing, and why do we get up and give thanks? And why do we read the scriptures? Is this all just tradition? We'll look at First Corinthians chapter fourteen for just a minute. Here is what they did in Corinth in the first century when they met together in their gatherings. Look at verse number fifteen. "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will

sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Verse sixteen, "Else when thou shalt bless"—that means, to speak well of—"with the spirit, how shall he that occupies through room of the unlearned say amen at thy giving of thanks"—so they were giving thanks—seeing he understands not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified." And then he speaks in verse nineteen of teaching.

So they sang. They prayed. They gave thanks. They blessed. They taught from the word of God. So we're doing the very same thing today. We have scriptural warrant in the pattern of scripture. We are seeing how a new testament church functioned in the first century. We are reminded here of the origin and the order. And we have of course the the observation.

Now we mentioned that it was the first day of the week (Acts chapter twenty and elsewhere); but not only when, but who and where. They that gladly received his word were baptized. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine which led to a fellowship which was expressed in the breaking of bread. And which was sustained by prayer. You cannot reverse that order. Salvation, baptism, truth, fellowship, expressed by the breaking of bread. We'll see that in a few moments. And then it is sustained (or empowered) by prayer.

We mentioned earlier, yesterday rather, that one of the hallmarks that Paul speaks of in chapter one, verses one and two is not only were they saved, not only were they saints, not only were they separated, but they were submissive to the claims of Lordship. That meant they bowed to the word of God in every area of their lives and owned him and his authority in their lives as Lord.

And also, it was always linked with a new testament church. So that means if you decide to go on a cruise with some friends, and it's Lord's day and you're off the coast of Greece, and you think, maybe you ought to remember the Lord here on board ship, just a few of us here—it is a testimony of an assembly. It's an assembly declaration. The assembly is pillar and ground of truth. As ground or bulwark we protect this truth, but as pillar we publish and proclaim it. Here's one way we proclaim it. We are a testimony to the Lord's death and burial and resurrection, and the assembly has the responsibility of doing that when it comes together to remember the Lord Jesus and to proclaim his death until he comes. So it is a declaration of our faith and a display of our obedience.

It also defines our fellowship. Now you have to go back to chapter ten. Paul says (and he speaks of the cup first, and then the bread, he reverses the order in chapter ten, and for good reason), the bread which we break, is it not our communion in the body of Christ? In other words, what he's saying is, as you take from that loaf, one thing you are saying is, that I am identifying myself with his body that was put upon a cross to die for me. For a first century Christian that would be a pretty big thing to do, to identify themselves with a man the world labeled a criminal and an impostor. We are identifying with him.

We're also identifying the fact that it was for me that he died. But he says there's something else you're doing as well. He says, in chapter ten, for we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. He says, you are saying that you are in fellowship with everyone else in the company who is partaking of that bread. You are saying, this is the fellowship to which I belong. We are one body. Now this is not the church, the body of Christ, because everyone is partaking of this loaf. He says that what you're doing is you are saying as you partake of that loaf that you are in fellowship with everyone in that local assembly. You all are in fellowship together relative to what you're doing and to the person you're gathered to, and it defines your fellowship. Now, he's saying that in the context of believers who were going elsewhere for fellowship.

So when I come to chapter ten (now I want you to grasp this, because I think it is a key takeaway from the meeting), the Lord's supper defines my sphere of fellowship, and how I behave when I'm not here. He says, you can't be going there, you can't be going there, you can't be doing this, and you can't be doing that if you're in fellowship here.

So partaking of the emblem on a Lord's day morning determines my behavior when I'm not here. What about chapter eleven? In chapter eleven Paul says, partaking of that loaf should determine how you behave when you are here. He says you're eating and drinking and you're shaming those that are poor and you're bringing reproach. And he says, as you partake of that loaf, it should determine how you behave when you're here. So now just put the two chapters together. Partaking of the loaf should control my behavior when I'm here, and partaking of the loaf should control my behavior when I'm not here. That pretty well takes our whole life, doesn't it. You're either, here or not here. I mean some might be somewhere else, but most of us are either here or not here. So it's really defining our behavior. It's really controlling my movements in life. Now I'm I'm not suggesting that other places are idol's temples, don't misunderstand me. But I am saying is the principle is this, it defines my sphere of fellowship, and it controls where I go and what I link myself with, because I've linked myself with other believers, and with the body of Christ. So it defines my fellowship and controls my behavior.

Just maybe a word when we're thinking about defining fellowship. I hope I'm not going to be getting into trouble for saying this. We meet on a Lord's day morning, and we meet in a circle, and I have to say it is a tradition, but I think it's a good tradition. Some might say, well, I thought we meet in the circle because the Lord's in the midst. The Lord's in the midst tonight, and we're not meeting in a circle. The Lord's in the midst at every meeting. But the lovely thing about a Lord's day morning when we're partaking of the emblems is that everyone is equidistant, or everyone is virtually equidistant. Tonight, I'm up here you're out there. On the Lord's day morning everyone is just on the same level. Everyone's gathered together, and we're expressing by our physical appearance a spiritual truth of our unity and our oneness around the person of Christ. But as well, some may say, why do we have a back seat, or a side seat just on a Lord's day morning, and not in a meeting like this?

Because it's on a Lord's day morning, as we break the bread and take from the cup, that we are expressing our fellowship in its purest form.

There are expressions of fellowship here tonight. But First Corinthians chapter ten tells me that as we partake of that loaf we are visibly proclaiming our fellowship with each other. And so it is appropriate that we we express that by our very seating configuration. But if for some reason it were impossible to have a circle, we're not somehow violating scripture.

Traditions can be one of three kinds. You know it's like if you wanted to defeat something in Congress, you just call it a Republican bill and the left raises all kinds of alarms and immediately it gets castigated in the press. Well, you want to get rid of something in an assembly, call it a tradition and everyone begins to come down on it. And we've got to get rid of it. But really there are three types of traditions. There are bad traditions. The Lord Jesus speaks of traditions of the elders, and he speaks of traditions of the fathers, and he speaks of 'your traditions,' and what was key to all those traditions was this, they set aside the word of God. They introduced something that negated what the word of God said. They were bad traditions. But then there are Biblical traditions. Paul speaks about 'keeping the traditions.' In fact, if we looked at the very beginning of this chapter in verse number two, he speaks about the ordinances, or the 'traditions.' A tradition is just something handed down, so prior to the inscripting of the word of God, truth was handed down.

And Paul speaks in second Thessalonians chapters two and three about the traditions, about keeping the traditions. So there can be Biblical traditions. Truth that was added down from the apostle Paul to assemblies, to Timothy, and so on. So there can be bad traditions and Biblical traditions, but there are beneficial traditions, and one of them is sitting in a circle. Another is everybody knowing what time the meeting starts. You might say, it's a tradition for us to have our meetings at eight o'clock. It's just a tradition. Well that's a very helpful one. If no one knew what time the meetings began, some would be coming at six or seven or eight, and some would just stay home and figure, I don't know what time, so why bother? And at the moment you change, you know, you say, well look, it's just a tradition, we're going to stop that, we're going to start having meetings at 7:30, well when you've had your second meeting at 7:30, you've now started a new tradition. So getting rid of one tradition simply brings in another. When it comes to things like that. So be very wary of just labeling everything as a tradition and getting rid of it. There are traditions which are beneficial, and while they may not have chapter and verse, they do express truth, and they are in keeping with truth. Sorry to take a side track there, but we've looked at declaring our faith, displaying our obedience, defining our fellowship.

We're not doing well. I've got nine points to cover in fifteen minutes. Quickly now, the Lord's supper dignifies our gatherings. 'It is the Lord's supper.' There are actually two expressions used, the breaking of bread and

the Lord's supper. One expresses absolute dignity, doesn't it: the Lord's supper. And the other, total simplicity: the breaking of bread.

So that you have both, simplicity and dignity, brought together in these two terms. Now it's actually not called a feast. I know our hymns speak of it as a feast, and we sing of it as a feast, and sometimes we speak about the feast, but it's called the Lord's supper, it's called the breaking of bread, it's called the remembrance. But it gives tremendous dignity to the assembly to remember that we're gathered to one who is the Lord. He's the Lord. It's the Lord's supper. We've come together to remember him, to remember not just his life and death, but his coming glories, his coming majesty, his coming greatness. It gives a reminder to the assembly that we are linked with a man the world despised, the world rejected, the world thought little of. It reminds us that we are counterculture. We will never be mainstream culture. If we ever become mainstream culture, we are totally out of the mind of God. We will always be counterculture to our society. The supper gives dignity to our gathering.

Another thing maybe you never thought about is this. It also details our doctrines. Now let me explain. That may take a bit of explaining. This is not a pat on the back. This is really the Lord's wisdom, not ours. We have been preserved as assemblies in large measure from doctrinal errors concerning the person of Christ. All of the sects out there are wrong, somewhere, on the person of Christ. And tragically, even in some mainstream Protestant churches there's absolute error concerning the person of Christ. Some would say the virgin birth is just a myth. In fact, that's been said; just a myth to explain away a very unusual event. And the idea that Christ could have sinned; some of the ideas are blasphemous that are present in mainstream Protestantism. But we have been preserved.

Now there are two or three reasons. Number one is, each assembly is autonomous. That's the Lord's tremendous wisdom which means we don't have a hierarchy which sends doctrine down to all of us that we then have to obey. Every assembly stands on its own, accountable to the Lord for its truth. And as a result, no one is imposing truth on the assembly that we all have to obey, as happens in large denominational circles.

But more than that. Have you ever thought, how that on every Lord's day morning, we verbally give testimony to virtually every truth concerning the person of Christ in our worship? And that's repeated week after week. One brother gets up and speaks about his eternal existence, the glories he had before the world began. Someone else will mention his virgin birth. Someone else will mention his spotless humanity, his perfect life, his grace, and his ministry. Someone else will mention his literal death, burial, and resurrection. Someone else will mention his ascension; and as we go through a morning meeting in our hymns, as well as in our audible worship, virtually every doctrine is repeated, week after week after week. Every doctrine is reinforced; every doctrine is ingrained in our minds and scripture is quoted. It's not just a matter that we're brainwashed to believe certain things. Scripture is quoted to substanti-

ate all of those truths, and as we go our doctrines are detailed every single weekend. We're reinforced in all of that. And we are very sensitive to anything that deviates from the doctrines concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, tremendous value that it has preserved us.

Let me just mention one or two other things and then close. But I want to just touch, since we're dealing with doctrines, on our participation on on a Lord's day morning. And how we are to participate. There is a need for preparation. Now I am speaking this—to get this straight—I am speaking to sisters as well as brethren. Every single believer should come to the breaking of bread prepared. That doesn't mean you come ready to take it up and preach a sermon. But it does mean you come with something that you would like to offer. Now our sisters do it silently. Our brethren do it audibly. But everyone comes to give something. Now listen to what the writer to Hebrews says. And it's significant. Because you all know, if I were to ask you what is the writer to Hebrews stressing in those final chapters of Hebrews, you would tell me, he's stressing that there are no longer any sacrifices. One sacrifice for sins forever, he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. There is no longer any sacrifices for sin. This man, after he had offered one sacrifice—time and again, in various ways, and through various means, the writer comes at this same point. No more sacrifices.

He comes to chapter thirteen, and he says, wait a minute, there are sacrifices. He says the sacrifice of the praise, the fruit of your lips giving thanks to his name: with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Is what you bring on a Lord's day morning a sacrifice? Has it cost you anything? You say, what do you mean, cost me something? It's going to take time. It's going to take time, as you read your Bible, to gather material for worship. For thanksgiving. Now, we should be doing that every day. As you're reading your bible daily you should be worshipping daily as well, thanking God daily for his son. But as you're reading, try to collect here and there a thought that the writer of Hebrews speaks of as the fruit your lips. It's something you've developed, something you've thought of, something you've enjoyed through the week, and you develop it. He said, I want you to be prepared. And he says I want you to present it when you come. Now our sisters do it silently, of course, but many times—I think most of our sisters would admit to this—that if they enjoying something, they usually find that a brother gets up and says something very similar or someone gives out a hymn which is just in keeping with what they've been thinking of. But it should cost us something. To be worshippers; to gather that which we can bring for for worship. So he speaks about preparation. He speaks about presentation and he speaks about participation.

Now for the sake of maybe a few of the younger men who are here. Don't get hung up on the idea that there's got to be a theme to the meeting, and I better make sure I'm following the theme of the meeting, and I wonder what that theme is? Let the spirit of God take care of that. If you're enjoying something, if there's something that has really touched you and you'd like to tell the father about it, just do it and allow the spirit of God to blend everything together. We've come to remember Christ. Now that's basically the para-

meter for our worship. We're not here to pray and and request things. We're not here to to preach to others and tell them all about the exegesis of Ephesians. We're here to remember the Lord.

And we do it through the word of God. Maybe that's another thing I should mention. Young Christians sometimes think remembering the Lord—you know, I sit there and I try to try to envision Christ. I try to envision him in his life—no. You remember Christ in the word of God. That's how you remember him. You were given the word of God to remember Christ through His word. So it's the word of God you bring to your mind. You're not trying to conjure up visions, trying to conjure up images, trying to imagine what it was like. No, you're here to think about what the word of God says about Christ. That's how you remember him through his word. And you come and you present and you give to God that which you're able to enjoy.

Now, never worry that really, you don't have anything that God doesn't already know about his son. You'll never have something God doesn't know about his son. But you know, it must delight the heart of God to find people on earth who are enjoying exactly what he is enjoying about his son. It must bring him tremendous delight to see a sister who is quietly thinking of Christ and enjoying some thought that she's read through the week, and she's thinking about it, and it's exactly what has thrilled the heart of God from eternity past. All of you with children and grandchildren will know what I mean. You delight in your children. And along comes some stranger and says, that's it's a lovely child you have, really a cute little girl you have, and you know it. But because they appreciate it, it means just a little something extra, right, that they appreciate what you've been enjoying all the time. Now that's only a faint picture of a father's heart and how much he delights in his son. So never fear that what I am bringing is not new enough, or is not novel enough. If you enjoyed it, just offer it to God as the fruit of your lips, as a sacrifice of praise giving thanks to his name.

We read together in Luke chapter twenty-two, and were reminded there the Lord's supper not only declares our faith; not only displays our obedience; not only defines our fellowship; not only dignifies our gatherings; not only details our doctrines; but it delivers from pride. We're reminded of pride at the very first occasion (Luke chapter twenty-two): who is going to be the greatest. If there was ever an occasion where the Lord was gracious, this was it. He's telling them about his death, about his sufferings, and they're arguing who's the greatest. Interesting, isn't it. When you're reading in Matthew and Mark, they tells us that in the upper room they sang a song. When you come to Luke, Luke doesn't mention a song. Because there was strife. So they're fighting among themselves and not singing. And I think that's true when we get friction, feuding, the song goes out and strife comes in. So there was pride at the very first supper. There's nothing that delivers from pride like remembering what we did, what we did to our god creator when he was here. That the summation of our wisdom, the pinnacle of our discernment, the expression of our hearts, was to put him upon a cross, not only unworthy of life, but unwor-

thy of earth—cast out of his own universe. And it reminds us of what's in our hearts.

I'll have to close. We read in Luke chapter twenty-two. We could look at it here as well. It focuses on the future, doesn't it. 'Do this in remembrance of me until I come.' It prepares for service. The Lord Jesus not only focused their attention on the future, (a table in my kingdom, to sit at my table, eat and so forth). But he says, now in my absence, there's service. He says. When I sent you without scrip and shoes lacked ye anything? No; but now he's getting them ready for service. And the centrality of the Lord's supper brings us all on the same level and humbles human pride, but it really directs us in our service. It prepares us for service for God, for the week the lies ahead.

I've never been there. Some here I think have been to Israel, I haven't. I doubt I'll ever get there. But one place I would not mind going to is a place called Masada. Those who know Jewish history will know what Masada is. It's a place of tremendous significance to the Jewish people, to the Israeli nation, a place where they held out against the Roman invasion until finally they could not hold out any more. And in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed, it was the last stronghold. People held out there as long as they could, and then committed suicide. I don't know if they still do it, but for a number of years inductees into the Israeli army were taken to Masada. And as they took their oaths they made this vow, Masada will never fall again. The remembrance of the death of heroes was fueling them for future service.

As we come together to remember the Lord, among many other things it does, it directs us in our service for God, and enables us to serve him effectively, humbly, dependently for His glory. Now we trust God will bless his word.