

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

By Guy V. Caskey

"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" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

What The Lord's Supper Is Not

The Lord's Supper is not the *agape*, the name of the "love feasts" of the early Christians, the meals provided by the members of the church for religious fellowship and especially for charity for the poor and the widows of the Christian community.

Paul made a clear distinction between the Lord's Supper, as a divine institution, which he had received from the Lord, and the *agape*, concerning which he laid down no regulations, except to ask, when they had turned it into a gluttonous, drunken meal, "Wherefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper ... 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" (I Corinthians 11:20-22).

The Lord's Supper is not a common meal. Those baptized on Pentecost in Jerusalem "continued steadfastly ... in the breaking of the bread" (Acts 2:42). The introduction of the article seems to emphasize here the Lord's Supper as distinct from the social meals of verse 46, where the Christians "shared their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (R.J. Knowling, *Expositor's Greek New Testament*).

What The Lord's Supper Is

"The Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance, a memorial of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. It is a feast of living union of believers with the Savior, whereby they truly, that is

spiritually and by faith, receive Christ with all His benefits, and are nourished with His life unto eternal life" (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I, p. 474). "The Supper is a personal fellowship with Christ. Partaking of one bread creates fellowship between the members too; it merges them into one body, the church" (G. Kittel).

This is what Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 10:16-17, when he asked, "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." "It is a thank offering of our persons to Christ, who died for us that we might live for him" (Schaff, Vol. 1, p. 474), "but it is also an

acted sermon, an acted proclamation of the death which it commemorates-'to proclaim the Lord's death till He comes' " (I Corinthians 11:26).

The Observance Of The Lord's Supper

With what frequency did the Christians in the New Testament, in association with the Apostles and under the guidance and surveillance of the Holy Spirit, eat the Lord's Supper? Luke, in Acts 2:42, says they "continued steadfastly ... in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers." This means, "to persist in adherence to a thing; to be intently engaged in; to attend constantly to; unremitting continuance to a thing; to be devoted to" (Thayer). Some of the translations have it: "They were regularly present" (TCNT). "They were constant in attendance" (Wey). "And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly" (Amp). This is a lesson that nearly half of our people have not yet learned!

In Acts 20:7, we have another example indicating the time on which those early disciples met to eat the Lord's Supper, "and on the first day of the week."

Mia: "In the New Testament, the cardinal number one stands for the ordinal number first. This is also true of the Hebrew from which it was derived." Other references in which this is used are: Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; John 20:19. Such scholars as Harper, Moulton, Gesenius, Winer, Thayer, et al, agree, saying, "Like Hebrew it is put for the ordinal" (Acts 20:7).

Sabbaton-the form is plural but the meaning is singular. It came to be equated with week. F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsop Lake in *Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. IV, p. 202, say: "Similarly, in the New Testament, *Sabbaton*, or *Sabbata*, with the meaning of the week is used only in the genitive dependent on a numeral to indicate a day (only of Sunday), Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; I Corinthians 16:2."

The article te before *mia* points out the one and same day on "which the bread was broken." This is strong, if not conclusive argument that the early disciples, in association with the Apostles, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, met every first day of the week for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. After all, is this not the purpose for their having come together?

Some Quotations From Scholarship

Albert Barnes, Acts 20:7: "Showing thus that this day was the one observed by Christians." "To break the bread"—"Evidently to celebrate the Lord's Supper." "It is probable that the Apostles and the early Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day."

Expositor's Greek New Testament: I Corinthians 16:2 "connects itself with the statement here in proof that this day had been marked out ... as a special day of worship and for the breaking of the bread."

Pulpit Commentary: "This is an important evidence of the keeping of the Lord's Day by the church as a day for their church assemblies." "To break the bread"—"This is also an

important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians-an essential part ... which man may not for any specious reasons omit."

R.C.H. Lenski: "On the first day-that is, on Sunday." "Much more regarding Sunday as the day of worship is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, I Corinthians 16:2, for this deals with regular Sunday worship." "I Corinthians 16:2 certainly shows the first day was the day of public worship without which we cannot get along in our Christian life." "The purpose of the gathering was to break the bread."

Alfred Plummer, *International Critical Commentary*, I Corinthians 11:20-34: "The early Christians seemed to have regarded the Lord's Supper as a commemoration of the resurrection as well as the death of Christ, for they selected the first day of the week for this memorial." He further says: "Paul assumes that the celebration will be frequent, for he directs that, however frequent, it must be guided by the Lord's instructions, so as to keep the remembrance of him unimpaired."

Marcus Dods, *The Expositor's Bible*, I Corinthians 11:20-34: "On a fixed day, generally the first day of the week, the church assembled, each bringing what he could as a contribution to the feast: fish, poultry, joints of meat, cheese, milk, honey, fruit, wine and bread. In some places, the proceedings began by partaking of the consecrated bread and wine; but in other places, physical appetite was first appeased by partaking of the meal provided, and after that, the bread and wine were handed around." "Both in the east and the west, the church settled down to the custom of celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly, and for some centuries it was expected that all members of the church should partake weekly."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165), the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 186: "On the day which is called Sunday, all Christians who dwell either in town or country come together to one place. The memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read for a certain time, and then the president of the meeting, when the reader has stopped, makes a discourse, in which he instructs and exhorts the people to the imitation of the good deeds which they have just heard. We then rise together, and address prayers to God, and when our prayers are ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president, to the best of his ability, offers up both prayers and thanksgiving, and the people assent, saying 'amen,' and then the distribution of bread and wine, over which the thanksgiving have been offered, is made to all present, and all partake of it."

G. Kittel, (*Kkao*), Acts 20:7 "... within the context of the Pauline mission, the breaking of the bread, which was on the Lord's Day, is a cultic meal, elsewhere described by Paul in Corinthians 11:20." He then shows that this is "the designation of the Lord's Supper" "... breaking the bread" is one of the titles, perhaps the oldest, for the new liturgical meal of fellow-ship in primitive Christianity, i.e., the Lord's Supper." "The breaking of the bread in Acts 20:7, which took place on Sunday..."

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: "Though we cannot trace the development with any detail, it is no less clear that before the end of the apostolic period, the regular time of meeting of Christians was the first day of the week, Sunday, or as Christians called it, the Lord's Day." "The beginning of the first day of the week the Christian disciples would gather for their own peculiar observances, including the breaking of the bread."

"Throughout the early centuries of history, Sunday was universally observed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper, not only as a memorial of the Lord's death, but also of his resurrection."

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: "The celebration of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) was characteristic of the Pentecostal Church (Acts 2:42), especially upon the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7)."

A Consideration of I Corinthians 16:2

International Critical Commentary: "On every first day of week." "This is our earliest evidence respecting the early consecration of the first day of the week by the Apostolic church." "The first day of the week is never called 'sabbath' in the scripture."

Expositor's Greek New Testament: "On every first day of the week." This is the "earliest mention of this Christian day, going to show that the First Day, not the Sabbath, was already the sacred day of the church."

Lenski: "Sunday by Sunday." "It is a fair inference that Sunday was the day which was set aside for public worship in ... the churches which had been founded by Paul."

The Importance Of The Lord's Supper

1. The Early Christians Were Commanded to Hold Fast (Hebrews 10:23). This meant "to hold in a firm grasp, to have in full and secure possession." This was said in the context of their public worship. In this they were to be unwavering, steady, firm, unmoved.

2. The Observance of the Lord's Supper Was So Important that they Continued Steadfastly in the Practice of It (Acts 2:42). Lenski says that this is a "periphrastic imperfect stressing continuance. To adhere with strength." "All the people not only attended all the meetings faithfully but also earnestly adhered to all that was taught." Luke used the expression that was common at that time for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, "breaking the bread." R.K. Knowling, *Expositor's Greek New Testament*: "Paul's habitual reference of the words before us [the breaking of the bread] to the Lord's Supper leads us to see in them a reference to the commemoration of the Lord's death." "That Paul's teaching as to the deep religious significance of the breaking of the bread carries us back to a very early date is evident from the fact that he speaks to the Corinthians of a custom long established." "It rested upon the positive command of Jesus, and it must have been generally observed from the beginning."

3. Early Christians Were Commanded to Eat the Bread and Drink the Cup (I Corinthians 11:24-26). "This do." "Perform this action-continue to take the bread, give thanks, and break it in remembrance of Me. The command to continue the celebration of the Lord's Supper rests upon Paul, but the passage implies that it was already a firmly established practice." "As often as you eat and drink..." "This is not permission; this is a command." "The Lord commanded that the Supper be repeated often." "In the verse Paul gives no direction to how frequently the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated but implies that it is to be done frequently, in

order to keep the remembrance of the Lord fresh." "The Lord's Supper perpetually calls to mind the redemption by Christ from the bondage of sin, as the Passover recalled the redemption from the bondage of Egypt-not just a memorial of my death but the remembrance of all that I have done, and all that I am to you" (Alfred Plummer).

4. They Were Commanded Not to Forsake the Assembly (Hebrews 10:25). That is how important it is. We must worship together; we must encourage one another; we must incite one another to noble living. Albert Barnes: "That is, for the purpose of public worship." This was an act of assembling. "The command, then, here is to meet together for the worship of God, and it is enjoined on Christians as an important duty to do it. It is implied, also, that there is blame or fault where this is neglected."

Expositor's Greek New Testament: "In order to fulfill his injunction, must not neglect meeting together for Christian worship and encouragement." "Those spoken of in Hebrews 10:25, as having abandoned meeting together with their fellow Christians, and possibly as having neglected, if not renounced, the confession of their hope, were perhaps alluded to here, as on their way to apostasy. They are warned that they are drifting into an irredeemable condition, for those who have repudiated and keep repudiating the one sacrifice of Christ."

Pulpit Commentary: "Some of them showed signs of such wavering, notably in their remiss attendance at Christian worship; let the faithful give heed to keeping faith alive in themselves and others, and especially through the means of the regular church assemblies."

Lenski: "Essential to such incitement to love and good works is the fact that we do not keep abandoning the assembly of our own selves." "The aim of the whole epistle is to counteract the defection from Christianity which had already set in among the Jewish Christian readers. They had begun to revert to Judaism. ... We see here that some had begun giving up their fellowship with the church. Thus some were abandoning the meetings, were afraid to be seen attending them, were just remaining away...."

McKnight: "The Apostle here speaks of deliberate apostasy, manifested by the apostate's forsaking the Christian assemblies. In the first age, it was of so heinous a nature, that Christ declared that He will deny the person before the Father, who has denied Him before men."

It Was Not Important To Some People

Although some of the Christians addressed in the Hebrew letter had "endured a great flight of affliction," others had absented themselves from the Christian assemblies, and some had abandoned the Cause of Christ altogether. James Moffatt, in *The International Critical Commentary*, and Albert Barnes, in his *Notes on Hebrews*, suggest that there were probably a number of reasons why these people were deterred from this important duty of common fellowship. Some were afraid of persecution, and would not, therefore, join themselves to other Christians. Others were absent because they felt no interest in the meetings. Still others had doubts about the necessity and propriety of this duty. There were those who were dissatisfied with Christianity and turned back to Judaism and paganism.

When I first read these statements, for a moment, I thought the author was describing brethren in this generation instead of those who lived in the first century; for their name is

legion to whom these expressions pertinently apply. Some had grown ashamed of their faith, because Christianity was insignificant, unpopular, and dangerous to anyone who identified himself with it openly. No doubt, there were among that number some who had grown tired of the sacrifices and hardships involved in embracing Christianity. Some were too involved in their business to meet with other Christians for worship; and still others considered themselves too good to require common worship. It was a false superiority—a feeling that they could do without public worship, and could worship privately, or at home, just as acceptably. And others it is suggested, felt that they had exhausted the benefits of Christianity and had turned to the philosophies of men. They had decided that it needed supplementing with some mystery-cult or with the teachings of some other social or religious system.

The Sins One Commits In Forsaking

When one neglects to meet with other Christians to worship God in honor of Christ, he not only endangers his own spiritual welfare, but he has "trampled under foot the Son of God." This is a very strong term, which means, "to tread upon another, to tread down or under feet" (Arndt & Gingrich). Conquerors in that day literally trampled their enemies under foot. A victorious general would drag the vanquished, defeated leader of the enemy forces behind his chariot, and before a shouting multitude, step roughly and tread triumphantly upon the nape of his neck. The same word, trample (*katapeteo*), is used by Jesus in Matthew 7:6, with reference to hogs that trample under foot precious pearls. When a Christian deliberately, intentionally, forsakes "the assembling of ourselves together," he has done to Christ what hogs do to precious stones in trampling them under foot in the muck and mire of the pig sty.

Furthermore, one who is guilty of forsaking the Christian assembly has "counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing." He has treated the blood of Christ as common, and, therefore, with abuse and irreverence. The terms mean, "to desecrate, debase, defile, vulgarize." It is to count common, cheap and ordinary the blood that redeemed him.

But, more than this, such a person has done "despite to the Spirit of grace." He says, in substance, "You have treated with contempt and reproach and disdain the grace of God which procures your salvation." I do not believe these sins can be committed with impunity!

What Will Happen To Those Who Forsake?

It is my conviction that the answer is found in the language of Paul in II Thessalonians 3:6: "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly." Moffatt translates this phrase: "To shun any brother who is loafing." And Williams renders it: "To hold yourself aloof from any brother who is a shirker." Thayer says that this word "disorderly" is used "of soldiers out of order or quitting the ranks. To be neglectful of duty, irregular." *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* says: "To infringe military order; to be irregular." Bullinger: "Not keeping the ranks; not in one's place; hence neglectful of duties." Arndt & Gingrich: "Not at one's post. Of irregular religious services."

W. E. Vine: "Describing certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit ... by idleness." Liddell & Scott: "To neglect one's duty, to fail to discharge obligation."

Brethren, this is a command. This is not something optional which is left to our judgment or discretion. It is a command, which, if obeyed, would save more souls, preserve the purity of the church and exalt and increase the respect of the church in the eyes of the world.

Conclusion

I once heard the story that when the father of Brother David Lipscomb died, other members of the family arranged for the funeral service to be conducted on Sunday morning. But Brother Lipscomb informed his family that he would be unable to attend, for he had an engagement with the Lord at that time!

Another thrilling story to me is the one about President James A. Garfield's first Sunday in Washington after his inauguration. A member of the cabinet insisted that a cabinet meeting must be called at 10:00 o'clock on Sunday morning to handle a matter that threatened a national crisis. Garfield refused on the grounds of another appointment. The cabinet member then insisted that the national matter was of grave importance, and that the President should break his engagement. Garfield refused. Then the cabinet member remarked: "I would be interested to know with whom you could have an engagement so important it cannot be broken?" Garfield replied: "I will be as frank as you are. My engagement is with the Lord, to meet Him at His house at His table at 10:00 o'clock tomorrow, and I shall be there."

May God help us to be so dedicated! How many people are there today who would not attend the funeral service of their own father if it interfered with their meeting with other Christians to worship God?

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