**The Lord’s Supper – the Ultimate Super Glue! II**

**Intro** – The apostle Paul recorded the most detailed section of the New Testament regarding the Lord’s Supper. Today we hope to learn all we can about this very important rite, the only such thing ever established by Jesus Himself. Thus far we have learned that the modern church has moved far away from the simple, powerful meal started by Jesus. What was once meant to be an event to super-unify us, was reduced over the centuries (for the sake of convenience) to a quick ritual, easily fitted into our modern church services. The Lord’s Supper was meant to bond us together like skin bonds together with Super Glue. Here’s what Paul had to say:

1 Cor 11:17-34 - 17 *But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. 18 First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. 19 But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized! 20 When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. 21 For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. 22 What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this! 23 For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it." 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. 27 So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. 31 But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. 32 Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world. 33 So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. 34 If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.* NLT Here are some important points from this Scripture:

1. **The Corinthian church was eating a fellowship meal together, not re-enacting the Passover meal**. They, being Gentile pagans, did not have the Jewish background of the Passover meal, although there were probably some converted Jews in the congregation. Paul had preached in the synagogue in Corinth and was not received. So, the church members were probably not replicating the Passover Supper. They were meeting to eat (**verse 33**) and had some prior knowledge of the Lord’s Supper (**Verse 20**) perhaps taught to them by the Apostle Paul. It is evident that whatever they did practice concerning the Lord’s Supper, It was accomplished during a meal. It was not a ritual spliced into a church service.

2. **A serious problem existed: there were long-standing divisions (schisms) among the members, long before they showed up for a meal.**  The church was comprised of a mixture of lots of poor people and a smaller number of well-to-do members. The church obviously had some slaves, more like household servants, in its number because Paul addressed how they should choose to be free if they could (**Chapter 7:21**). We can only guess at what the divisions actually were (skin color, economic standing, age, gender, etc.) but the manifestation of the division showed up in selfishness during the consumption of the food and drink. Some hoarded food, leaving nothing for others. Others drank so much of the wine that they got drunk. These acts were evidence of the deeper problems. Paul made the staggering pronouncement that for these reasons, some members were weak and sick and some had died. Over the years, I have never heard a really good explanation of this ominous warning attached to these divisions (**verses 29-31**). Somehow, I understood that the Lord’s Supper was a risky thing; that maybe I’d die if I didn’t do it properly. What did it mean to take it in an unworthy manner? What did it mean to examine myself before taking it? Why take it at all if I was going to die from it?

Taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner has nothing to do with how worthy we are. We are made worthy by the blood of Jesus the instant we believe. The focus in all explanations I ever heard was on the gluttony or drunkenness at the meal*.* The self-examination, then, must have had something to do with eating or drinking too much or some kind of other sin, or something??  *In reality, the real problem was the underlying divisions between individuals or groups within the church, before they even got to the table!* The self-examination Paul talked about had to with an honest self-appraisal of my relationships with all other members of my church body before I even showed up at church, not a micro-audit of whether or not I had thought a cuss word while driving, or let my lawn grow above the 6” limit imposed by my borough, or drove over a groundhog on my way to church. Arriving in great shape relationally with my brethren (and therefore with God) is all that is needed to qualify me to enjoy the privileged wonders of the Lord’s Supper. *Unity of the brethren* is so important to Jesus that it has the potential to keep us strong, well, and living!! Please understand that there are other reasons why a person may get sick, like overwork, infection, injury, etc. This is only one cause among many, but it is a supremely important one. We do not have the liberty to dislike anybody! We cannot say “That brother bugs me!” “That sister rubs me the wrong way!” “I want nothing to do with them!” We don’t even have the liberty to simply avoid our brethren. The modern church makes it possible to go to a major church, sit through a service, sing worship songs, listen to the message, leave when it’s over and make it out of the parking lot, all without ever meeting anyone! The modern church also spends lots of time trying to get well by claiming promises, praying, getting prophetic words, listening to Scripture, declaring or rebuking, etc., all of which have their place and effect, but all of which are largely private efforts which don’t involve others. Broken relationships and petty grudges stay alive and well as we pray in the Spirit, prophesy, and listen to sermons. Yet, we can’t figure out why we get sick or can’t get healed. Paul’s major teaching says that we can get sick by despising people and distancing ourselves from them! Concerning divisions, we must all quickly take care of any grudges so that as much as we have control over them, we are at peace with all men. We can’t control what others do to us, but we can control how we respond to them.

**Rom 12:18** *Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.* NLT

**3. The consumption of wine in our culture is a sensitive point**. Just like eating food offered to idols was a hot-button issue for the Corinthians, drinking alcohol is one for us today. Two settings are in view in Paul’s teachings throughout the rest of 1 Corinthians: one is the gathering of the church, with its spiritual practices given by God (laying on of hands, worship, baptism, teaching, etc.). In this setting, we are to allow no man to judge us in what we eat or drink or in any special festivals or calendar events. So, if a previously addicted Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous member comes into our church and he objects to the use of wine in our meal, we do not have to cease our practice in order to be politically correct. If his conscience will not allow him to have the wine we serve, we are not to belittle him and force him to drink. It is OUR gathering he is joining; we are not joining HIS gathering. The same reasoning applies to seasonal decorations like a Christmas tree, which some Christians find offensive. There is no directive in the Scripture to avoid such a widely accepted cultural decoration, and no reason to take it down, because an offended brother is joining OUR function, in which we do what we do.

*The converse situation calls for us to be careful, however.* If we are in a different setting, i.e., his home or a public place, we should not let our liberty to consume wine be a stumbling block for him by emboldening him to override his conscience to take a drink of alcohol. If we do that, we cause him to sin. Even though the drink is not a problem, his willingness to disobey his conscience is a sin for him at that point. Paul used the consumption of meat offered to idols as an illustration of that truth:

**1 Cor 8:8-13** - 8 It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't lose anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do. 9 But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. 10 For if others see you—with your "superior knowledge"—eating in the temple of an idol, won't they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? 11 So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. 12 And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. 13 So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to cause another believer to stumble. NLT

**Concl** – It is apparent that the Lord’s Supper was meant to be something very special, not just an ordinary meal. Paul’s admonition in **Verses 21 and 34** show that satisfying hunger is not the point of this rite. We are to eat at home to satisfy that. The Lord’s Supper, perhaps even more than our usual laying on of hands, was meant to be a vehicle for uniting, bonding and healing. It may be the most important thing we do together compared to all the other functions we are involved in (teaching, baptizing, counseling, helping, etc.). It truly is the Lord’s Ultimate Super Glue!! If it is reduced to a small, quick, ritual in which we can remain comfortably distanced from those who offend us, we probably will not see much effect. The greatest men in the Bible were called to the job of proclaiming the Lord’s death. All of them have an incomprehensible reward they are enjoying in heaven right now. They stood before angels, kings, men, and demons and announced the coming death of Jesus. We, as a group of believers, eating this seemingly normal meal together, are announcing the Lord’s accomplished death and its eternal consequences - the eternal condemnation of demons, the devil, and the ungodly of men, and the abundant salvation of the believers!! The walls of our Fellowship Hall do not block the vision of demons who are still active in the lives of men in the realm of the spirit. They tremble. Many will release their hold on men just from the fear of our unity as they watch us eat. All we have to do is be friends and eat a meal together! Amazing!!

So, what should this knowledge impel us to do? *First*, make things right with everyone with whom you have a grudge. Forgive, that is, don’t bring the matter up again to yourself, others, or the one who offended you. If necessary, ask for forgiveness if you were the offender. *Secondly,* move toward the person you dislike. Take the initiative to reestablish a friendship, making a “bond of peace.” It is not going to be enough to just have a truce with someone. We are to aggressively bond with them until there is unity of the Spirit. *Thirdly*, get into a body of people with whom you can sit down and enjoy this love feast.