

What better time to explore the relationship between communion, that is, the Lord's Supper and fellowship with Christ and fellowship with one another. This coming Friday we celebrate Christmas. From before time Christ's birth was planned by God the Father and at the same time Christ's death was also planned. Both Christ's birth and His death are celebrations. Before we jump into specifically examining the Lord's Supper, I will lay a foundation for my thoughts.

As our supporting churches, prayer partners, Joyce and I felt the Lord was calling me to plant a church I gave up my ministry in evangelism and missions. As we prayed, we felt the Lord calling us to the East Mountains instead of Albuquerque. Our church and prayer partners felt the Lord saying the same thing, which confirmed what the Lord was placing on my heart. We have been a church for about 5 years. It is my prayer that you have grown spiritually as we have worshiped together and worked through the scriptures. I have grown tremendously by spending protracted time in prayer with the Lord and study of His Word. My life has been greatly enriched living the scriptures with all of you and in the sharing of our lives and I have grown deeply in love with you all.

Prior to Canyon Bible Joyce and I spent years as missionaries. My time was spent overseeing schools and churches, developer of pastors, facilitator of underground church planting partnerships and sharing the gospel. During this time spiritual warfare was just part of the package. If we were not experiencing spiritual warfare then we were not a threat to the evil one and we

were not doing what the Lord had called us to. Spiritual warfare came from within and without. I expected it and prepared for it. In the same sense, back here in the states, I did not understand how my experience with spiritual warfare related to pastoring a church. However, I soon came to understand it is the same.

If we, you and me, are pushing the boundaries to see the Lord take back territory from the evil one, then we become a threat to him, we are his enemy and he will attack. **When Satan attacks a church he often does so by working at destroying fellowship.** First, he works at destroying our fellowship with Christ by way of doubt, trying to convince us there is no forgiveness of sins or false doctrine. Secondly, he works at destroying fellowship with each other: husband and wife, parent and child, and brothers and sisters in Christ. I feel we have been experiencing spiritual warfare as we have worked to stay true to the Bible and in so doing the working out of what it means to be a church living God's Word in a desolate land. This has affected the fellowship within our community both positively and negatively.

The question that has been coming to my heart during my prayer time is, "If we are growing spiritually why are we struggling with fellowship?" Part of the answer is spiritual warfare and spiritual practices. Spiritual life and fellowship is more than being together for a couple of hours on Sunday. For us to have meaningful relationships and fellowship with each other it must be on the foundation of our fellowship with Christ. There are many things that affect our relationship with Christ such as the demands of work and family and the distractions of daily living. The demands of living can often rob time that

should be spent with God. As our fellowship with God wanes to and fro, so too, does our fellowship with our spouses, children and brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a spiritual problem.

As a church we are called to consider others more worthy than ourselves. We are to have servant's hearts. Yet, to serve others means more energy and more time, even as we live in a society that is already way too busy. Being bi-vocational, this is true for me as well. Having to give my employer a good effort and having to give Canyon Bible Church a good effort is, at times, difficult. There are times I feel the church has come in second place and to be honest my wife third. Please pray for the Lord to show me the path I need to travel to resolve this stress of being torn by two purposes. Pray for direction as I consider leaving my job and what this would mean financially. Pray that the Lord begins revealing the right path to this solution. Pray for my strength to wage spiritual war and remain faithful to my Most Holy God, Joyce and Canyon Bible.

One step that the Lord has put on my heart concerning our church and fellowship and time management is to exhort the men to come forth and serve in the church. But, that raises another question, "How do we balance the demands of job, family and church?" I am not sure I have a complete answer, other than life is full of choices and some aspects of life may have to be set aside in order to serve well - God, family and church. I am asking the men to pray about how the Lord is leading each one to serve in 2016.

With serving and fellowship in mind, over the next few months I will be taking occasional breaks from my preaching through the scriptures to address key

elements of living the Christian life.

At the heart of the Christian lifestyle is having the right fellowship with Christ in order to hear His instruction and have the strength to be obedient. If our life and fellowship with Christ is not strong we will not have the strength to do spiritual battle, share the gospel and serve others. If we grow weary then the elements of Christian life will slip and we will live out of routine instead of living with the fire of God in our hearts.

Like many things in life, how we live, can become rote. Routine can help us to be faithful in aspects of daily living, such as having a set time for prayer and study of the Bible. However, routine for routine's sake may lead to shallowness in our fellowship with Christ. The routine and elements of Christian practice are very important to spiritual health.

Now that I have expressed my concerns about living a life fully engaged in ministry of Christ, waging head-on spiritual warfare and living with a passion to fully experience the deepest possible fellowship with Christ. I want us to see how these will be strengthened through the Lord's Supper.

Fellowship

The first deeply important practice and element of Christian life that the Lord has put on my heart to preach on is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper may be one of the practices of the church that can become routine. Do we have the Lord's Supper on the 3rd Sunday of the month out of routine? Yes, it is in part of the pattern of our church. But, I hope and pray it is not routine. The holiness of the Lord's Supper is vital to our fellowship with Christ. **The Lord's**

Supper is one of the two ordinances or practices that the Bible instructs the Church of Jesus Christ to practice until His return. Taking a few of weeks break from 1st John and spending time preaching on the Lord's Supper, I pray will help us renew our efforts in maintaining our fellowship with Christ through this rich experience. Our fellowship with Christ is the foundation for all other relationships or fellowships. As our fellowship with Christ is strengthened, so too, will our fellowship with each other benefit. In addition, it will help us develop a servant heart.

Why We Eat

Please turn in your Bibles to 1st Corinthians chapter 11 beginning in verse 23. Please stand and follow along as Brother Shawn reads the Holy Word of God beginning in verse 23 of chapter 11. Shawn reads, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

27 "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are

weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.” (NASB) Please be seated.

Let me take us back in time, almost 500 hundred years ago. A Baptist from the Netherlands, named Sicke Snyder Freerks was beheaded for being re-baptized as an **adult** believer, which was against Catholic Church teaching. In the court records it is written, “Sicke Freerks, on this 20th of March, 1531, is condemned by the Court to be executed with the sword; his body shall be laid on the wheel, and his head set upon a stake, because he has been re-baptized, and perseveres in that baptism.” He was re-baptized as a believer and refused to disavow his believer’s baptism, thus indicating his baptism as a baby was not valid.

Just over twenty years later a short distance away in England, Bloody Mary, Queen of Scots, began the persecution of Protestants in 1555. For a period of 3 short years 288 Protestant Reformers were burned at the Stake. Mary was not partial among those she had executed; there was 1 archbishop, 4 bishops, 21 clergymen, 55 women and 4 children. What was the reason for these people to be so horribly executed? It centered on what the meaning of the Lord’s Supper is.

John Charles Ryle, nineteenth century Bishop of Liverpool wrote of this very concern about the Lord’s Supper and those martyred. Bishop Ryle wrote, “The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper. Did they, or

did they not believe that the body and blood were really, that is corporally, literally, locally, and materially, present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not believe that the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was present on the so-called altar so soon as the mystical words had passed the lips of the priest? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.”

I shared these two stories of martyrdom to illustrate the importance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In the past history of the church, to insist that baptism is for believers only and to deny that the physical body of Christ is in the elements of bread and wine illustrates the importance of these two ordinances. Their symbolism is so important that believers considered them worth **dying** for. Some people with power and control also thought they were worth killing for, as did Bloody Mary, Queen of Scots. During these formative times of the Reformation what was really at stake?

Let me give a brief answer to this question. In the 14th and 15th centuries control was central. The relationship between church and state were so interwoven that anything that threatened one threatened the other. If baptism was a voluntary act of believers publicly recognizing what Christ had done in a person’s life, then a church would be free to act and assemble under Christ’s authority and the secular-religious authority over the people would be compromised and control lost. A clear example of this thought and demand for control is found in the death of Felix Manz who was executed by drowning in 1527 in Switzerland for being a Baptist. The court record states, “They do not

allow Infant Baptism. In this way they will put an end to secular authority.”

What this is saying was that it was capital crime to be a Baptist or to believe in “Believer’s Baptism” because it was treason against the church authority, which was tightly interwoven with secular authority. Today, we find this kind of violent action in an effort to control those who challenge religious authority in the context of Islam.

In the world of Christianity people are no longer beheaded, burned at the stake or drowned, but to this very day the practices of Infant or Believers Baptism separates not only the Roman Catholic Church from the Protestant Church, but denominations within the Protestant churches. There are still two concerns, first and foremost the teachings and authority of the Bible and second, man’s desire and need to control.

When it came to the Lord’s Supper the battle was more theological, but of course with people involved it was political as well. In the 14th century the Catholic Church controlled much of government, a number of kings and a great percentage of the people. At the heart of the Mass was communion and at the heart of communion was the material presence of the incarnate body of Christ in the form of the bread and wine. If this was true in the weekly act of communion and it’s consecration by the words of a Priest, Christ is sacrificed at every communion. To the Protestant Reformers this undermined the gospel that taught Christ was crucified once for all and for all sins. Bishop Ryle who I quoted earlier expressed the Protestant view on this when he wrote, “Grant for a moment that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice, and not a sacrament. ... You spoil the blessed doctrine of Christ’s finished work when He died on the cross.

A sacrifice that needs to be repeated is not a perfect and complete thing. You spoil the priestly office of Christ. If there are priests that can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God besides Him, the great High Priest is robbed of His glory. ... You overthrow the true doctrine of Christ' human nature. In the body born of the Virgin Mary can he be in more places than one at the same time, is not a body like our own, and Jesus was not the 'last Adam' in the truth of our nature."

As we spend time considering the great sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I ask that we humble ourselves and realize we enjoy freedom of religion because some made a stand and were burned at the stake. An even more importantly, may we not lose the wonder and awe and weight of what Christ has given us! If we recognize this earlier broken form of church was marked by brutality, we need to also recognize our age is marked by superficiality and shallowness. I am asking us to consider the weight of the truth of the Lord's Supper.

I want to look at the heart of what Jesus said concerning the Lord's Supper. We will spend our time in 1st Corinthians chapter 11. Reading verse 24, Jesus said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Now look at verse 25 "as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." Paul has recorded here what he received from Christ and is passing a command of Jesus through scripture on to the church and to you and me.

This Is My Body

We have already visited that; "This is My body" does not mean Jesus' physical body is present in the bread. Let me speak of what it **does** mean. Look at verse

26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” Jesus taught Paul and he is teaching us that this representation by the bread as Jesus’ broken body you are proclaiming Jesus’ death as saved sinners until He returns.

Proclamation

By taking the bread you proclaim the substance of the gospel. The bread and cup of the Lord’s Supper proclaim the saving death and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is the final sacrifice who defeated death. We remember and honor that God loved us so much He gave His only begotten Son that we might have spiritual life and fellowship with Him through Christ.

Remembrance

In verses 24 and 25 Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” This tells us that the non-literal body of Christ is a representation of His body and is meant to remind us of His sacrifice. First, we proclaim His death and we are reminded of the price He paid that our sins might be forgiven. Jesus says, “Remember Me, the One who was betrayed – the One who knew He would be betrayed and was willing to allow it so that you might be saved. Give thanks for My betrayal, for My Father and now your Father ordained it. Remember Me as the bread is broken and let it remind you how My body was broken, how it had to be broken so that by My death you would live. Remember how My human source of life, My blood, was shed and spilt, so that the Holy Spirit might pour My spiritual blood into your soul and bring you new life in Me. Remember My that My sufferings brought you the New Covenant. Life with God was lost by

the first Adam – life once again with God was given by Me, the second Adam. Remember Me as I told you, as it is recorded in the Gospel According to Mark, “Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:25) This is fulfilled, Jesus is in heaven and He lives! Let our partaking in the Lord’s Supper flood us with memories of Christ and all that He has done throughout history, but even more personally, what He has done in each of our lives. Let the fullness of Jesus’ love and power flood our souls as we come to this memorial table.

Feast

This table of the Lord’s Supper is to be a feast. Jesus tells us this in John’s gospel account, saying, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” (John 6:35) As you eat this bread and drink this cup, Jesus is saying, “Come to Me, believe in Me and live through Me.” We eat and drink by faith to feed our souls. Nourish your heart and soul on all the blessings that Jesus brought by the sacrifice of His body and blood. Turn back just one chapter to 1st Corinthians chapter 10 and I will begin in verse 16. Here we read what Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? We celebrate the Lord’s Supper not only as individuals, but the Lord’s Supper is shared as a church. We see this clearly as Paul continues in verse 17, “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) The Lord’s Supper brings a person closer to Jesus and it brings a church closer to Him and it brings unity among brothers

and sisters. We are to repent and confess our sins before Christ in preparation of the Lord's Supper. This eliminates the conflict and division so common in the world, but out of place in Jesus' church.

This is why the evil one wants to lessen and misdirect the Lord's Supper, to take our focus off of the death and resurrection of Christ and all that it means. It is why the evil one tries to get churches to change and corrupt the Lord's Supper, for it will damage their fellowship with Christ both corporately and individually.

Now I say, **come to the Lord's Supper not out of obligation or routine, but come and experience Christ, the Risen Lord. Let Christ satisfy your soul. Let the Lord's Supper increase your love for Christ.** Let the power of Christ cover you with the cleansing of sin from your life. As we prepare to partake in the Lord's Supper let us also take to heart what Jesus spoke, for we need to understand we are an offering to Him as well, **“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”** (Matthew 5:23-24) Secondly, we need to prepare as Paul instructed in our passage in 1st Corinthians 11, in verses 27 and 28, **“Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”** Now we will take time to meditate on the seriousness and joy of the Lord's Supper, confess our sins, repent before the Lord and prepare our heart, mind and soul to eat of the Lord and drink His blessings.

Please spend a few moments of time in silent prayer.

Brother Shawn please pray for the Lord's Supper we will now partake and distribute the elements.

Now my beloved let us remember, proclaim, rejoice and feast upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "The Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' " Please, my beloved in Christ, eat the bread of life, may it nourish your soul, by our faith we are obedient. 25 "In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.' " My beloved, drink and celebrate the spiritual life Christ brought into your souls. Drink. Remember as it is written in verse, 26 "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." I say, Amen and Amen!

We close by taking a moment to reflect on Christ and how He gained your salvation and then we will sing praise to Christ.