



“UNTIL HE COMES: UNDERSTANDING THE LORD’S SUPPER,” PART 1

July 6, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

Every now and then, when I stand up here, I sense the gravity of God’s Word weighing on me:

- The responsibility to plainly teach the truth burdens my mind and heart. Many days of spiritual battles have sometimes preceded my Sunday mornings with you.
- I am cognizant of my responsibility to teach what may be unpopular – and perhaps even offensive to some. It comes with the territory.
- But I also know that it is important for us – individually and collectively – to discern what God’s Word divinely presents.
- This two-week miniseries on The Lord’s Supper is one of those occasions – these two lessons are pivotal for our individual and communal growth.
- (And so) I ask for your prayers, even now, that I remain faithful to the righteous intentions of Scripture - - - for MY benefit and for YOURS.

BACKGROUND

Let me begin by saying that Jesus Christ’s first instruction to the church is found in **Matthew 18:15-17**. That passage reads:

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they

still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Jesus’ gives several important instructions in this passage, but there is one overarching matter I want to draw your attention to: sin within a community of believers is a big problem.

- Sin needs to be confronted. It cannot be sidestepped. It must be properly dealt with.
- Sin, in **1 Cor. 5:6**, is like ‘leaven’ – we call that yeast. And Paul writes that ‘*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*’ of dough.
- We may not realize it, but OUR sins that we cultivate in secret, cover in pride, and tolerate in conformity to the world erodes our capacities for proper fellowship.
- In other words, a little bit of sin goes a long way. Sin desires to ‘have us’ as it did with Cain. It is not static; sin always seeks to grow.
- Therefore, even a single instance of sin - if left unchecked within a Christian community, can potentially disrupt that entire fellowship.
- (And) the Bible’s standards for a community of believers don’t stop with this prescription on how to deal with sin.

Following Jesus’ ascension to heaven, His apostles managed the formation and spread of the early church. A few things were their top priorities.

It was a pure and simple approach. In no specific order, those **top priorities** were:

- **First, worship** – but there were no bands, no dancing, and no prescriptive arm waving. Their worship did not have a start time or a stop time.
 - You see, true worship is NOT a performance. It’s not confined to certain words or certain musical structures.
 - It’s not about emotions either. Worship is NOT flipping a switch and ‘finding your happy place.’
 - **John 4:24** says true worship is about an individual’s inner posture. It’s about worshipping God ‘*in spirit and in truth*.’
 - As such, worship is not limited to any ONE sort of act. Worship is not a program or any sequence of events. It is not the result of a specific environment.
 - True worship is all about a choice to properly acknowledge God and to honor what is known about Him. Worship is not something you put on your calendar.
 - **NOTE:** It’s very important to understand that true worship is focused ON GOD (as opposed to any saint or substitute).
 - It requires that the heart and attitude of the worshipper be in the right place and have a RIGHT view of God.
 - That’s why Job worshipped God when Job was acutely struck with all his profound tragedies. He displayed a RIGHT view of God even though his personal circumstances were exceedingly painful.
 - True worship is not contingent on our personal circumstances or environment.

- **Another priority of the early church was fellowship** – like worship, fellowship has lost its proper definition in the modern church.
 - Today, fellowship has come to mean anything from hanging out and watching movies with your friends, to having a potluck, a baby shower, or a Bible study. (There are many things that people call ‘fellowship’ that probably aren’t.)
 - But fellowship in the early church was a time of collective effort and purpose. Its aim was to encourage genuine bonding between Christians.
 - It was a collaborative occasion - - mutually beneficial goals exist between true believers in fellowship.
 - Fellowship like this has real INTENTION. It’s a deeply personal identification with another person(s).
 - This kind of relationship is not possible with anyone who is outside of the faith.
 - We can have various sorts of relationships with unbelievers – even good relationships - but true Christian fellowship is a dynamic that is exclusive within the body of Christ.
 - Doctrinally, we are to be of one mind and heart: united to one another by common passions, purposes, and pursuits.

- **Then there is sharing** – the early church was communal in nature, and as such, they were extraordinarily hospitable with one another.
 - They supported each other. They provided for each other.
 - They SHARED what they each had for the good of all. Those that had resources and means shared with those who did not.
 - Everyone had something to give, and everyone had something they needed to receive.
 - In short, the hospitality and benevolence of the early church was rooted in a spirit and goal of sharing.
 - The early church was known by their commitment to sharing with each other. This quality was uncommon within the cultures they were a part of.

- **Then we come to prayer** – one of the things that is weakest in the church today was very strong in the early church. That is prayer.
 - The discipline of prayer in the early church was not just an individual habit, but it was core to their lives, to their structure, and to their activities together.
 - From the very inception of the early church, those believers were *devoted* to prayer. In many ways, it was a driving force that supported all they did.
 - Immediately after Jesus’ ascension, the eleven disciples returned to the upper room in Jerusalem, and Luke records in **Acts 1:14** that their *first* activity was to “*devote themselves to prayer.*”
 - From the time of the early church, prayer has been a primary focus of Christian community.

- **Then lastly, the early church was focused on the proper STUDY of God’s Word**

- They avidly studied the OT, which were the main Scriptures of that time.
- Their services and meeting times were primarily an occasion of preaching. Their goal was to grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures. It all starts there...
- They also read letters from missionaries such as Paul, and some of these letters were divinely inspired to become portions of the NT we know today.
- But their focus was the preaching of the Word of God and the teachings of the apostles.
- They were careful to observe all they were instructed to do. They applied what they were taught.

NOTE: A summary of these top priorities of the early church can be found in **Acts 2:42-47** which read as follows:

*“They (this is the early church) devoted themselves to **the apostles’ teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers **were together and had everything in common**. They **sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need**. **Every day** they continued **to meet together** in the temple courts. They **broke bread** in their homes and **ate together** with glad and sincere hearts, **praising God** and enjoying the favor of all the people.”*

(WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THIS? Or - - if you do things God’s way, then what happens?)
(vs. 47 says) *“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

The early church grew; it flourished. Today, we would say “it was on fire.”

- As a result of focusing on a few priorities – and doing those things regularly, sincerely, and faithfully – the early church had an effective ministry.
- Their focus was ON EACH OTHER. That’s important. It was all about building community and staying faithful to the teaching of the Word.
- This was all about edifying and equipping the saints. It was not about being ‘attractive to the lost.’ God blessed them because their focus was on HIM, and on each other.
- The early church did not stoop to reach the world by the world’s standards. And so, we read that God added to their number daily those who were being saved.

NOTE: But in addition to confronting sin, and in addition to fellowship, prayer, sharing, worship, and the proper study of God’s Word - - there was one other very important standard the early church maintained.

There was one other top priority that was an integral part of their function and fabric - - and that was **The Lord’s Supper**. In the passage I just read, this shows up twice, and it is called the ‘breaking of bread.’

I want to start transitioning now into this matter of The Lord’s Supper, and to do that, let’s go back to that issue of confronting sin.

1. The Bible's prescription to properly confronting sin is not followed in most churches today. In fact, very few...
2. Despite the fact it is a CLEAR Biblical instruction, and it's not confusing to understand - - most churches still do not do what they are told to do.
3. Following the obvious instructions of Scripture has given way - instead - to convenience and political correctness. The path of least resistance.
4. Many churches are much more concerned about the social consequences of doing what's right than the spiritual consequences of doing what's wrong.
5. They are more obsessed with what they DON'T want to be - rather than what they SHOULD be!

But the truth of the Bible is this: obedience to the Word of God always brings God's blessing to a community of believers. We saw this 'cause and effect' pattern in **Acts 2:42-47**.

SOBERING POINT: We cannot teach about sin, and we cannot teach about God's instructions to a body of believers - - then sit on our hands and close our eyes and refuse to follow what the Bible makes plain to us.

That makes us hypocrites and actors of the very worst sort. It's dangerous to our own spiritual welfare – and it's not pleasing to God.

Personal comment. One of my heart's greatest desires is that THIS fellowship – THIS body of believers – this group known as Solid Bread Community – would be faithful – TRULY faithful – to the clear instructions of God's Word.

1. That includes all those things that pertain to faithful living and communal fellowship.
 - Those are the things we've just learned from our study in Jude: *"build yourselves up in your most holy faith," "pray in the Holy Spirit," "keep yourselves in God's love," "wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring (us) to eternal life,"* and so on...
 - That also includes how we deal with sin in our own lives and in the lives of others.
2. It means we need to steer clear of subscribing to popular opinion if that does not align with God's Word.
3. It means we need to avoid cultural models and ideals if those things are not supported in Scripture.
4. It means we need to go on 'offense' as well as 'defense' if we are going to '*contend for the faith*' as **Jude vs. 3** says.
5. If we REALLY care about being a righteous example, if we REALLY care about faithful living, if we REALLY care about being pure before God, then we will REALLY do what God instructs to achieve those things.
6. I've heard many times over the years from those who are blessed by Solid Bread Community. They often say it's because we teach and affirm those things which the Bible clearly teaches and affirms.

7. We do not leapfrog over uncomfortable truths; we do not splash around in the kiddie pool with shallow and socially acceptable 'devotionals.'
8. Rather, we fully recognize that truth is sometimes uncomfortable, but we also know what is in Scripture is there for OUR benefit.
9. And so, we unpack these truths; we face them squarely. We learn what they are saying, and – I hope! - we hold ourselves accountable to them.

Now, all that about sin, about purity, about proper fellowship, about sharing and worship, and about commitment to truth (and so on) - - all of this converges. All these things find a focal point or a common ground in this occasion of The Lord's Supper.

- The title of this two-week miniseries, **"Until He Comes: Understanding the Lord's Supper,"** implies there is a conclusion or an end goal.
- We're in the journey now – but there is a 'destination' if you will - that we need to keep a sharp focus on.
- That finish line is the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Everything is complete at that point. All will then be fulfilled.
- But UNTIL He returns, we must obey God's Word. We must stay faithful to its accurate teaching and do what it says.

Now, I've grown up in the church as many of you have.

- The Lord's Supper - also called 'communion,' 'The Lord's Table,' or the 'sacraments' – is generally treated as something of an afterthought.
- It's often nothing more than an appendix to a standard church service. It's largely become a mindless ritual - - a formality we really don't think much about.
- All too frequently, The Lord's Supper is a casual 5–10-minute add-on to 25 minutes of shallow 'praise and worship' music, 20 minutes of superficial preaching, and 10 minutes of a silly skit.
- I would even suggest that some people who take communion today are more concerned with gluten-free wafers than they are concerned with properly confronting their sin.
- All that to say, the Lord's Supper is an occasion concerning which the Bible lays out VERY clear instructions and warnings for us.
- Most churches do not teach these things because they're not palatable by modern standards. They're tough to chew on and swallow.
- They are uncomfortable to hear. They are personally convicting and corporately confrontational. They interfere with the agenda to make the church something it was not intended to be.
- And so, The Lord's Supper has – unfortunately – become collateral damage. It is now largely a ceremony that has lost its meaning.
- Because so many churches are focused on 'being attractive to the lost,' The Lord's Supper has become a watered-down event which lacks any power of conviction.

- Instead, it has become a casual ritual, one in which true reverence lacks, true accountability flees, and unconfessed sin persists.
- But - The Lord's Supper is intended to **help preserve** the purity of a body of believers.
- It's for the saints! It is intended to **keep** that community's spiritual flames hot instead of fading into lukewarm ineffectiveness.

I've seen over and over that when most churches engage in The Lord's Supper, they draw from the Gospel accounts of the FIRST Lord's Supper like **Matthew Ch. 26, Mark Ch. 14, Luke Ch. 22, and John Ch. 13.**

- They quote the words of Jesus like "*Do this in remembrance of me*" to set up their ten-minute ritual.
- They pass around the Oyster crackers or pieces of Saltines. They sip Welch's Grape Juice from tiny plastic cups made in China and bought on Amazon.
- Then they tap their toes impatiently during the closing prayer before jumping up and racing home so they can watch football.
- I'm deliberately being flippant here to underscore a pervasive problem - - but I'm probably much closer to the facts than not.

We'll look at what we can learn from those Gospel accounts too, but today, we're going to dive headlong into the deep end.

- There are two passages concerning The Lord's Supper which are often overlooked, and they are found in **1 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11.**
- These passages were once a letter to the early church – but they were divinely inspired to become part of Scripture.
- We need to look at these passages because Paul says in them that there is more we need to consider concerning The Lord's Supper. For example....
 - We will find that a PROPER approach to The Lord's Supper directly confronts personal sin. You cannot avoid this.
 - A PROPER approach to the Lord's Supper promotes healthy fellowship, reinforces a commitment to prayer, and encourages communal sharing and conviction.
 - A PROPER approach to The Lord's Supper forces one to wrestle with the truth of God's Word and to worship Jesus Christ as HE intended Himself to be worshipped (and so on)....
- In other words, IF The Lord's Supper is given its proper place and priority, and IF it is conducted according to the instructions of Scripture, then it ties together all these other top priorities - - and that's why it's so important!
- So, as a result, here in **1 Cor. Chapters 10 and 11**, we find a series of instructions and reminders which are confrontational and convicting.

We NEED to understand and apply these things, so please turn there now. There is a clear outline of things we need to pay attention to:

1. FIRST, THE LORD'S SUPPER COMPELS US TO REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST'S WORK OF SALVATION ON THE CROSS (**1 Cor. 11:24-26**)

- This is the most familiar aspect of The Lord's Supper.
- It is an occasion in which we are to exercise a conscious remembrance of Christ's work on the cross.
- It's about HIS sacrifice for OUR sin. It's you and I willfully wrapping our heads and hearts around the fact that Jesus Christ paid OUR penalty for OUR sin so that we would not have to.
- It's about HIS death in exchange for OUR glorious eternal life. We use this time to remember that Jesus gave His life so that we might have life IN HIM.
- It doesn't matter whether we were saved young, if we were saved old, or if our past is filled with the sordid stains of many great sins.
- It doesn't matter if we help the poor, pay our taxes, and always drive the speed limit. It's fruitless to try to live a good and moral life without Jesus Christ.
- And so, The Lord's Supper is about recognizing Christ's marvelous gift of salvation to you and me.
- And in response, it's about giving thanks to Him for this incredible GIFT that we did not earn or deserve.

2. SECOND, THE LORD'S SUPPER IS ABOUT COLLECTIVELY SHARING IN CHRIST'S PRESENCE (**1 Cor. 10:16**)

- One of the important points of The Lord's Supper is to celebrate our common position – our union – in other words, our '*comm-union*' in Christ.
- In fact, it's here we get the term 'communion.' It's about eagerly participating in that 'common union' we all have in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- This particular point is also – at least partly – where the errant Catholic teaching of 'transubstantiation' comes from.
- They believe the bread and the wine ACTUALLY BECOMES the physical body and blood of Christ, and of course that is not true. The Bible does not teach that – and common sense does not support it.
- Some denominations – the Lutherans, and some orthodox groups for example – teach that the elements of The Lord's Supper become some sort of 'spiritual body and blood of Christ.'
- I feel that is a rather vague and slippery slope that can easily lead into the errors of the Catholic position. It is 'spiritualizing the text and the occasion' to arrive at conclusions God's Word does not stand behind.
- So how are we to understand this 'sharing,' this 'participation in the presence' (in effect, 'the blood and body') of Jesus Christ?
- Think of this the same way we need to think of prayer - - or of praise, or of worship. These things are – or they SHOULD be – exercises which display true COMMUNING with Christ.

- The Bible says that Jesus Christ inhabits – or He ‘embodies’ - the praises of His people in ***Psalms 22:3***.
- He is lifted up, He is magnified, and yes – He is involved in, He is part of – these postures of reverence and adoration.
- It’s more or less the same with The Lord’s Supper. It is a memorial in which there is a sharing or participation in the body and blood of Christ.
- It is sharing in Christ’s presence via the Holy Spirit who indwells us. We commune with Him, and He communes with us.
- The Lord’s Supper is an occasion in which we collectively remember and celebrate our shared life in Jesus Christ.

3. THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER IS IT IS AN OCCASION IN WHICH WE FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER AS ONE BODY OF SAINTS (***1 Cor. 10:17***)

- (BTW, this group of believers gets its name, ‘Solid Bread Community,’ in part because of this passage).
- But this point is closely tied to the one just before. The Lord’s Supper is intended to direct our focus on that which is our common denominator.
- We are all part of one body with Jesus Christ as its head. We are part of one bread.
- We are all brought to one place – to a single position of humility and reverence. We all recognize our **common status** as brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - For example, we are all incapable of saving ourselves. Instead, we have ALL been saved ‘by grace through faith.’
 - We have ALL been delivered from the consequences of sin and brought into a shared eternal life.
 - We ALL rely on the daily mercy and grace of Jesus Christ (and so on).
- The bottom line is we are all saints. We are one body. We ALL partake of one loaf as Paul says. There are no distinctions (and there should not be).
- As ***Eph. 4:4-6*** also says, there is “...*one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.*” It’s about our unity of being one - - not more, just ONE.
- We are all on one level playing field since we’re all needy sinners that have been saved by the torn body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.
- That’s Paul’s point. That’s what he’s trying to get across. ALL of us come to The Lord’s Supper to celebrate His work on the cross for ALL of us. There’s nobody better, nobody worse.
- (And) we also come to this occasion in OBEDIENCE. We obey the Bible’s command to have fellowship as ONE common body of Christ.

4. FOURTH, THE LORD’S SUPPER CALLS US TO WORSHIP GOD IN AN UNCORRUPTED AND WORTHY MANNER (***1 Cor. 10:19-22***)

- The Corinthian church existed in a culture that was pantheistic. They believed in and they venerated multiple 'gods' – and Paul rightly points out that this form of pagan worship gave adoration to many demons.
- By contrast, Paul calls the Corinthian believers – and also you and I! – to be different.
- We must not be like the world which gives its idolatrous affections to myriad things, entities, and goals.
- The Bible says we are 'set apart,' 'holy,' and 'separated' for God's purposes. This is what is meant by 'sanctification.' True believers are 'sanctified;' we are not like the unsaved who are not set apart.
- And so, The Lord's Supper – in recognition of our 'sanctification' - is an occasion to give PROPER and UNCORRUPTED worship to the ONE TRUE GOD. We are not to be distracted, diluted, or misled.
- This worship of God in a most holy and worthy manner seeks to have a laser-like focus, and a singular passion.
- What Paul is essentially saying is this: The Lord's Supper puts the spotlight on any mixed loyalties we may be cultivating.
- He is saying we cannot permit any foothold, any beachhead, or any vestige of 'the dark side' to have a presence in our lives.
- We cannot have one foot in the kingdom of Satan and the other foot in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We cannot diversify our affections.
- Men, your marriage is not going to work if you are married to one woman, but you are burning up with passions and obsessions for another woman.
- That illustrates (a bit) what Paul is saying here. You cannot be loyal to two directions.
- The Lord's Supper is where you leave all other distractions behind and focus on God. It is an occasion to worship Him in an uncorrupted, loyal, and worthy manner.
- As Dr. John MacArthur says, "The Lord's Supper invites a fresh commitment to His Lordship." And that is spot on...

5. FIFTH, THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A KEY OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR SELF-EXAMINATION AND PURIFICATION (**1 Cor. 11:27-29**)

- This one is a big deal! Here are several comparative points from these verses:
 - ✓ There is a right way and a wrong way to participate in The Lord's Supper. That much is clear.
 - ✓ **The wrong way** is called the 'unworthy' way. It's casual, dismissive, inattentive, ritualistic, thoughtless, passive, and callous.
 - ✓ In this text, the wrong way is the guilty way, and it invites judgement, as we will see.
 - ✓ **The right way** is one which is self-examining. It treads carefully, and it looks into each corner of the heart. It is cautious.

- ✓ The right way is not frivolous and superficial as with the unworthy way. Instead, the right way is discerning, and so – it is one which requires personal humility.
- ✓ Just as there is no room for mixed loyalties at The Lord's Supper, there is no room for personal pride either.
- ✓ The right way seeks to approach The Lord's Supper not only with a right view of God, but with a right view of self.
- Here's why this is so important – and this detail is brought out in **vs. 29**.
 - ✓ It is personally perilous to mindlessly and ritualistically participate in The Lord's Supper.
 - If one does not exercise a proper comprehension of the blood and body of Christ,
 - If one does not properly examine themselves and pursue confession and repentance,
 - (And) if one dismisses their need to assess their own spiritual condition,
 -then the Bible says, *'they eat and drink judgment upon themselves.'*
 - ✓ For such a callous and casual person, they may receive God's discipline - - His chastening hand - - Yes! HIS judgment!
- This fact becomes a key reason why The Lord's Supper is so very vital to the Christian faith. The Lord's Supper is a personal and corporate purification process.
- It is an opportunity to reorient oneself - - to get back on the path that is difficult to travel, and to proceed towards the narrow gate which few will find.

NOTE: This is heavy stuff. Let's take a breather for a moment and consider what we've learned to this point:

1. The regular and proper routine of The Lord's Supper will regularly and properly confront us with those things that keep our faith and our community strong.
2. It addresses top priorities we need to stay grounded in - - those things we need to remember and keep top of mind:
 - It's remembering Christ's work of salvation on the cross.
 - It's about sharing and participating in Christ's presence.
 - It promotes intentional fellowship as one body of believers.
 - It challenges us to confront any mixed loyalties we may have, and to redirect our worship to God.
 - It's an opportunity for self-examination and purification.
 - NOTE: Here's the warning with that last point: one better not come to The Lord's Supper and evaluate their condition improperly.
 - Nobody wants to fall under God's judgment.

NOTE: I'm going to conclude there. I want to pick up next week on this last warning element. There are some very sobering matters for us to consider when it comes to God's judgment.

I also have a couple more points about The Lord's Supper to extract from **1 Cor. Chapters 10 and 11**. Then we're going to review the Gospel accounts of the FIRST Lord's Supper and see what we can learn – and apply - from that.



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Solid Bread Community began with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.