

Sound in the Faith

by Bob Pulliam

Lesson 5

The Lord's Supper, Prayers, and Giving



Memory Verses: John 8:31; II Timothy 2:15 (KJV); Ephesians 1:22f

One of the blessings we have as Christians is gathering to worship God. In our modern world, we have to be careful that we never get too busy to assemble with the saints. It is for our benefit; the benefit of the other brethren; and to the glory of God. As David said long ago: “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’*” (Ps 122:1)

When we assemble, God has commanded that we engage in certain acts of worship. In this lesson, and the two which follow, we will be studying these acts of worship. This will help us understand what God expects of us as we engage in these forms of worship.

Worship in General...

Before we study some of the specifics in worship, let's discuss the concept of worship. One of the words translated “worship” in the New Testament means ‘to kiss the hand in reverence’. It should reflect an attitude of adoration and devotion without rival in anyone, or anything upon this earth. I knew a woman, many years ago, who clipped her nails during the Lord's Supper. The memorial feast of the Lord is not an appropriate place to be tending our personal hygiene. She wouldn't have dreamed of doing this during a prayer, but she did so during a time when she and everyone around her was to be remembering the death of Jesus. I have no doubt that she was thinking about the death of Jesus as she clipped away. But that does not change the fact that she was distracting others, and making a time of reverential remembrance a common toiletry session.

We need to always keep in mind the nature of our gathering. In this way we can focus on glorifying God; praising Him for the blessings He has heaped upon us. While some distraction is inevitable in an assembly of many people (*e.g.* coughing, sneezing, coming and going to the restroom, etc...), we must do our best to show a reverence by giving our

attention to the service, and remaining as orderly as possible. There is no reverence in confusion; and there is no respect in thinking about other things. People, at times, have trouble remembering that worship services are not the place to be cleaning out their purse; passing notes; paying attention to the babies two pews away; clipping fingernails (or toenails); etc... We can only worship the Lord when our minds are focused on Him and His will for us. Unfortunately, some people seem to think that worship automatically happens simply by showing up and sitting in the pew.

Question Set Number One

- 1) What must we never get too busy to do?
- 2) Worship is for what three benefits?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- 3) What was David glad to be told?
- 4) One ancient word for worship meant what?
- 5) We do our best to show reverence by doing what two things?
 - a)
 - b)
- 6) What is there no reverence in?
- 7) What is there no respect in?
- 8) Some people seem to think that worship simply takes place by?...

The Lord's Supper...

The Lord's supper is sometimes called the communion service. Older denominations also call it a sacrament, believing that partaking of it forgives sins. This is how the practice of taking communion to the sick began. It was considered important that they might have their sins forgiven. However, in scripture, the Lord's supper is commanded of those who are assembled together as the church (I Cor 11:18, 20, 33). And it was not used as a means of forgiving sin. The sick do not need the Lord's supper brought to them, any more than they need for someone to come around and take up their offering (contribution). They are not obligated to partake, if they are unable to attend. We do not carry the supper to those who have to work all day Sunday. We consider them to be unavoidably

absent. And the same is true of the sick. Carrying the communion to the sick is not authorized in scripture, and was invented due to false doctrine on it's purpose.

The Lord's supper is an act of worship that memorializes the death of Jesus. Paul summed this up when he wrote to the Corinthians:

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)

Here we learn that this memorial supper was instituted on the night of His betrayal (Mt 26:26f). It involves two elements. The bread represents the body of Jesus, and the cup (fruit of the vine - Mt 26:29) represents His blood. The purpose of partaking of these elements is not to forgive sins. When we partake of these emblems, we do so in remembrance of Him. In so doing, we proclaim His death until He come. In other words, we profess our faith in His sacrifice.

Another error on this subject, is the doctrine of substance change. Some denominations teach that the bread and juice actually become the body and blood of Jesus. Some will teach that it does so when the priest blesses the elements; and others teach that it does so within your body. Either way, we have a doctrine of theology that ignores the obvious metaphor being used by Jesus. When He told the disciples, "*this is my body*"; He then said to them, "*do this in remembrance of Me*". It obviously wasn't His literal body, since he was standing right there with them. And it obviously was bread, since the gospel writers, and Paul, all tell us that He "*took bread*". Jesus also said "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood*". We know that the cup didn't turn into anything. The cup is another figure of speech, referring to it's contents. What we find, then, is that the bread and the fruit of the vine were instituted as a means of remembering our Savior's death. Not to consume His literal body.

In addition, we might consider the occasion of Jesus instituting this memorial supper. He did so at that last Passover feast before His death on the cross. The Passover feast itself was a memorial feast. It was instituted to remember the night that God gave deliverance to Israel. They were in Egyptian bondage, and each Israelite was to follow certain instructions to

protect their family from the angel of death who would pass through Egypt that night. Included in that feast was unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (among a few other things). In coming generations, the Israelites were to partake of the Passover every year to remember God's deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Ex 12:24-27). The Lord's supper takes on that same purpose. Only it memorializes the death of Jesus to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

So, when we partake of the Lord's supper, we are remembering the death of Jesus. Jesus had said, "*do this in remembrance of Me*". And that is where our minds should be when we partake. In remembering His death for us like this, we create a frame of mind within ourselves that stirs up gratitude, and a willingness to sacrifice for Him. When you place that bread on your tongue, try to picture the terrible agonies our Savior endured. Imagine that scene of torn flesh and bloodshed, knowing that He endured it for each one of us.

Before we leave this subject, let's talk about the frequency of this act of worship. Some will engage in it one Sunday a month, or possibly two. Others will engage in it sporadically during the week, anytime they feel like doing so. Seeking scriptural guidance on this subject will lead us to only one day and frequency for it's observance. Every first day of the week was the practice of early saints. Luke tells us:

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. (Acts 20:7)

Notice that the day of observance is described as "*the first day of the week*". If this were a monthly observance, Luke would have specified the particular Sunday out of the month. For example, he could have told us that it was the second Sunday of the month. But he simply tells us that it was the first day of the week. Every time a first day of the week rolls around, we should be observing this practice of breaking bread.

Some would tell us that there is no way of knowing that this was the Lord's supper. "Breaking bread" was used of common meals, so how do we know that this wasn't a common meal? Please take careful note of three things about the way Luke words this. First of all, these events are specifically attached to the first day of the week. And secondly, it is associated with the disciples coming together. Then, lastly, Paul is preaching to the disciples. Obviously, this is not a common meal. There would be no reason to even speak of it, if it were. But the disciples had gathered together to worship God on the first day of the week.

As an additional note, we might consider the unleavened bread in this

feast. The bread Jesus used to institute His supper was unleavened bread. In more recent years, some have denied that the bread must be unleavened. They tell us that Jesus had no choice in what bread to use. They affirm that the amount of leavening was incidental to the circumstance.

I believe that these people are thinking a little too hard, and need to consider that God chose the occasion on which Jesus would institute this great memorial feast. Not only that, but we find Paul making a reference to this practice, in the context of not allowing sin to remain unchallenged in the church. He wrote:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (I Corinthians 5:8)

What feast were they to keep? And how would leavening have any significance in his analogy? It was only significant if they used unleavened bread in that feast?

Question Set Number Two

- 1) The Lord's supper is sometimes called what?
- 2) Older denominations call it what?
- 3) They believe partaking of it does what?
- 4) What practice started by believing this?
- 5) The sick don't need the Lord's supper taken to them any more than they need what?
- 6) The Lord's supper is an act of worship that...

- 7) It was instituted when?
- 8) The bread represents what?
- 9) The fruit of the vine represents what?
- 10) What is the purpose of these?
- 11) What was the occasion of Jesus instituting this?
- 12) That ancient feast was to remember -

- 13) What did the death of Jesus deliver us from?
- 14) Where should our minds be during the Lord's supper?
- 15) How often should we partake?
- 16) What was the bread used at the Passover called?

Praying to God in Worship...

Prayer is a very personal aspect of our relationship with God. Unlike the Lord's supper, which is to be observed when the church is gathered together, prayer should be individually offered by every disciple of the Lord. But we also find that prayers are to be offered up publicly, in the assembly. Paul asked the Corinthians, "*if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks,*" (I Cor 14:16) While a spiritual (miraculous) gift was being exercised, it was a prayer being offered in the assembly. That our private lives should be filled with prayer is clear from scripture. Paul told the Thessalonians to "*pray without ceasing*" (I Th 5:17). And he told the Colossians, "*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving*" (Col 4:2). So we should be praying every day, many times a day. So, as we discuss the subject of prayer in this lesson, keep in mind that both of these occasions (public and private) are under consideration.

When we pray, it is important that the following conditions be true. We must have our minds focused on what is being said; we must have faith; be obedient to God; and forgiving of others. Just throwing words out into the air is senseless and vain. Concerning asking God for wisdom, James said, "*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*" (Jms 1:6ff) We cannot live any way we like and expect God to be pleased with us, or our prayers. John wrote, "*whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments*" (I Jn 3:22). Jesus said that our forgiveness from God is blocked by our unwillingness to forgive others. "*But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Mt 6:15) In addition to these conditions, it is important that we understand that God's will must be done in all things. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He prayed that the sufferings before him be taken away. But when He did so, He prayed, "*nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*" (Lk 22:42) Never use God as a personal vending machine for your desires. Our highest longing should be to do the will of God, and that all we seek be according to His will.

What should we include in our prayers? First, we ought to suit our prayers to the situation. For example, when a prayer is offered at the Lord's table for the bread or fruit of the vine, there is only one vital thing that needs to be done. And that is to thank the Lord for those elements. That is what Jesus did, and we should also (Lk 22:19). A prayer before a Bible study really needs only to thank the Lord for His word, and pray for

wisdom to understand aright His truth. Prayers are not better because they are longer. Prayers are best when they suit the purpose at hand, and express the heart of the worshiper(s).

Prayer should be addressed to God. The admonition of Jesus to His disciples was that they pray to the Father (Mt 6:9). Prayers in the New Testament are typically addressed to the Father, He being the giver of all good and perfect gifts (Jms 1:17). We should follow this pattern, rather than the practice of the denominations around us, who will oftentimes address their prayers to Jesus.

Prayers, in general, should be thought out to include these four parts: praise and thanksgiving for blessings; requests for divine aid; pleas for forgiveness; and intercession for others in peril. Remember that some prayers are specific for a certain circumstance. They need only include what is necessary for that circumstance. But times when prayer is offered to comprehend general conditions and needs should include these.

Prayers are offered “in the name of” (meaning - by the authority of) Jesus. It is primarily an attitude of mind when the prayer is offered; but is wisely included in the wording of the prayer. Jesus is the only means by which we may approach the Father in prayer (I Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25). Prayers are ended with an “amen”, which means “may it be so”. In public prayers, hearers who agree may affirm the prayer by also saying “amen”. It usually is not considered proper for women to speak up in this way, however (I Cor 14:34).

Question Set Number Three

- 1) Who should offer prayers to God?
- 2) What should our private lives be filled with?
- 3) What were the Thessalonians told to do?
- 4) What are the two occasions prayer is appropriate?
- 5) What conditions must be true while we pray?
 - a) b)
 - c) d)
- 6) Who are N.T. prayers typically addressed to?
- 7) What four parts of prayer should we include when praying?
 - a) b)
 - c) d)
- 8) Who is the only means by which we may pray to the Father?
- 9) Prayers are ended with what term?

Giving of Our Means...

The church in the New Testament had a particular way of handling financial needs. At the very beginning, the need was benevolent in nature. Those who had substance, gave that none would be in want (Acts 2:44f; 4:32-37). Later, we read of Paul being supported by various churches in his labors (Phil 4:15f; II Cor 11:8). This was a support of evangelism.

Many churches today bind tithing on their members. Tithing was an Old Testament practice, where the worshiper gave ten percent. The New Testament, however, does not command tithing. There is an expectation of each disciple to give as he or she has been prospered by the Lord (16:2). We may be able to give more than ten percent, and we may not. The Lord expects us to be generous with Him, just as He has been generous with us. Jesus taught the principle of proportion in giving when he pointed out the poor widow who threw two mites into the temple treasury (Mk 12:41-44). Of all who had given an abundance, she had given more. For “*she out of her poverty put in all that she had*”. We may not have a lot. But the Lord knows the sacrifices we make in this regard.

Giving is done on the first day of the week, when we gather together (I Cor 16:2). We are never told how the early church did this. If it were after the pattern of the temple and synagogue, then a box was placed at the entrance, and members would cast their money into the box as they entered or exited. Giving is an act of worship, but we need to beware lest we think that throwing money into a plate is worship. The worship is found in the attitude and sacrifice made; Not in the act of putting something into a plate.

Question Set Number Four

- 1) What was the nature of the first needs in the church?
- 2) What later needs arose?
- 3) What do many churches bind, that the N.T. does not command?
- 4) How is each disciple to give to the Lord?
- 5) Those who give more are necessarily more pleasing to God. T F
- 6) When is giving as worship to be done?
- 7) We need to beware of thinking that this form of worship is...