

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 1Corinthians 10:16

Store In My Heart

Acts 20:32

And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

As Paul gave instructions to the Ephesian elders, he emphasized our dependance upon God's Word. Without the Word we are not able to accomplish any of what we must do to be saved. God left this message to make us strong enough to do what needs to be done. With the Word we can conquer any fear or trial that might be in our way. As we go about our daily life we need to have the Word in our minds so that we are ready for whatever may arise.

But the Word is also to impress upon us the need for God in our life.

The promised rest is ours if we but use the Word to remain sanctified in God's sight.



Confronting The Challenge Of Assembling

R.J. Evans

The frightening invisible virus that we are presently experiencing calls to mind the words of Joshua---"you have not passed this way before" (Josh. 3:4). How true those words are today. Elders and churches are grappling over what to do. I believe they are sincerely trying to find expedient ways to worship, while at the same time, making sure that what they do is scriptural and authorized in God's word. During this present distress we need to exercise great love, patience, good-will, forbearance, and understanding.

I have been reading and listening to more Bible studies and discussions the past few weeks than I have at any time during my life. Some brethren believe it is unscriptural to cancel worship services under any conditions. Some believe there is a law of mercy now much like when Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath and went on to say that if the ox is in the pit, get him out (**Lk. 14:1-5**). It appears that partaking of the Lord's Supper outside the assembly in one's home, and engaging in virtual worship, are the two most commonly discussed. I believe we all realize that we are to meet on the first day of the week to engage in what we often refer to as the five acts of worship. There are scriptures to support this.

Of these five, we see three of these in our everyday lives, and a fourth, in one sense. The five acts of worship that we find in the assembly are: The Lord's Supper, praying, preaching, singing, and giving or the collection for the "church treasury." An example of three of these in one setting are found in **Acts 16:25-34**. Paul and Silas were singing and praying while in prison, and on the same night, they preached the word to the Philippian jailor and his family. As individuals, we give assistance, money, food, etc. to those in need. The Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan teaches this (**Lk. 10:25-37**). In fact, "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). By way of contrast, the money we give on the first day of the week to the (Lord) church treasury is limited to the scriptural work of the church: Edification (place to assemble, Bible materials for study, etc.); Evangelism---support of preachers such as Paul (**1Cor. 9; 2Cor. 11:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:15-20**); Benevolence---"needy saints" only---brethren in Judea (**Acts 11:27-30**); needy saints in Jerusalem (**1Cor. 16:1-2; 2Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:26-28**).

Now, back to what we do on the first day of the week. Paul stayed seven days in Troas to meet with the brethren there, for we are told: "*Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...*" (**Acts 20:7**). But someone says, "Show me the context of a congregation coming 'together' to engage in the five acts of worship that we teach."

Let's go to **1Corinthians 11-16**, and there we will find it. We must keep in mind that Paul is correcting the problems and perversions that existed in the Corinthian's worship, but we see each item. He begins with the Lord's Supper in

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Church of Christ
1512 Tanner Street
Malvern, AR 72104
(501) 332-8806

Find Us Online

preacher@tannerst.com

tannerst.com
FB @TannerStCoC

For Our Information

Remember our brethren who are in isolation at this time. They need our calls and our prayers.

Some are still dealing with illness that has nothing to do with the virus, but need to stay isolated because of the virus.

Spend an extra hour or two in Bible reading and prayer. Especially if you have more time because you are not at work.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

the assembly. Notice carefully "you come together" (11:17); "you come together as a church" (11:18); "you come together in one place" (11:20; he later speaks again about "the whole church comes together in one place" 14:23); "you come together" (11:34). Secondly, we find preaching in chapter 14:1-5. Thirdly, we find singing in 14:15. Fourthly, we find praying in 14:15. And, fifthly, we find the collection/giving to the treasury on the first day of the week in 16:1-2. This is why we do not take a collection on Wednesday, or partake of the Lord's Supper on Thursday, or any other day than the first day of the week.

The most often question I am asked pertains to partaking of the Lord's Supper away from the assembly in the home. Years ago, churches had Lord's Supper kits they took to Christians who were in the hospital or sick at home. But during my lifetime, brethren generally stopped doing that because, by faith (Rom. 10:17), we only find the Lord's Supper when the church is assembled together in one place on the first day of the week. The same is true of the collection on the first day of the week. Again, the other three acts we find in our everyday lives, besides just on the first day of the week.

I present my own convictions on this matter when asked; it is a matter of what my conscience will allow, based upon my understanding and practice of God's word. I leave it up to other Christians as to what they believe they can do---I do not try to bind my conscience upon them. I can only tell them what I have concluded as stated above.

Brethren are grappling over and searching out what to do now during this crisis. Do we partake of the Lord's Supper at home? And what about the collection? The church has financial obligations to meet. Right now I know of churches that are having someone at the building at a certain time for members who desire to bring their contribution on the first day of the week for the treasury. I know of one congregation that has a building like ours, double doors with a tiny crack between them, and members are stopping by on the first day of the week and slipping their check through for the treasurer to deposit later, and some are mailing in their checks and an elder or someone else does this for them. Each church is autonomous; hopefully and prayerfully, they are deciding what they believe is best and right for their situation in light of God's authority in His word.

Yes, I believe brethren are seeking to do what they believe is right during this time of traveling through "uncharted waters." Should we be concerned and cautious about what we are doing? Absolutely! My fear is virtual worship now will someday lead to "virtual churches" in the future. Not immediately, because there are enough of us older, wiser brethren who will not allow it. But we already have a younger generation that spends most of their time with their heads in their Smart phones, resulting in the lack of personal relationships and interaction. The news media is talking about how this crisis will change our university and school systems. Students need not go live on campus, they can learn and take their classes on-line. Will brethren someday decide that it was much easier just worshipping on-line at home. Why get dressed and drive to meet together in the assembly with brethren in one place? We'll just worship at home and make our contribution via PayPal. If so, I guess forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:25) would then be when you fail to look and listen to your Smart phone, I-pad or computer. Of course, these high-tech devices that I just mentioned will probably be obsolete by then.

Do I have all the answers concerning all we are facing now? Absolutely not! Do I have some concerns, reservations, and fears? Yes, I do.

Let us pray that this pandemic will pass soon, and while we are enduring it, also seek to do what is right and pleasing in God's sight. May God bless us in every way in doing His will.



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!