

In search of...

Truth & Right

Volume 10 Issue 28

July 12, 2015

Drive Thru Communion

I was recently asked a question by a brother from another congregation regarding communion. Apparently, he has been witness to what seems to be an ever-increasing practice on the part of some of today's saints, to just arbitrarily show up at the worship service long enough to take communion, and then to depart, apparently for other, more worldly pursuits. In part, he wrote:

"I know it says to come together and break bread on the first day of the week. Where I'm having a problem is when people come to church just to take communion and then leave. This concerns me. I'm left wondering, 'Do these people think as long as they've taken communion on the first day [of the week - Acts 20:7], everything is okay?' It tells us to worship together, not just take communion together. As important as it is to take communion, am I wrong to think that it's bad for a person to come to church just for communion?"

To begin with, please let me say that to me at least, the single most important, incomparable, and incredibly spiritually intimate moment of the entire worship service itself, is when we gather around the Lord's table to meet and commune with Him; He being present in accordance with His promise; our faithfully and obediently observing this in remembrance of Him (Lk.

22:14-20). Without this, and what it signifies, nothing else we do in worship would matter; not the singing, the sermon, or the prayers of the saints – nothing. If it were not for Jesus Christ's blood sacrifice on that cross for my sins – the very personal and spiritually intimate meaning behind the very practice of communion as expressed in that passage by our beloved Savior Himself – then nothing else I could do in worship would ever, or could ever, amount to anything whatsoever. I can't sing, or serve, or pray, or preach my way into His presence, and neither can you. Only His blood sacrifice completely accomplishes that. And only communion obediently celebrates that.

But, having established communion as being the single most important item and the spiritual centerpiece around which everything else in the worship service revolves as far as I can see, it is still indeed extremely sad when the saints of God come only for that alone and then leave. Remember, even though the hub which connects a wagon wheel or bicycle tire to the wagon or bicycle itself may be the weight bearing and therefore the most highly important and significant centerpiece around which everything else revolves in the entire wheel apparatus, the hub alone, without the spokes, gets one nowhere at all, and certainly not to their hoped-for destination!

And the same is true with communion. The night Jesus instituted it, he spent several hours both before and after its institution, teaching His disciples (Matt. 26:17-46; Mk.12:42; Lk. 22:1-46; Jn. 13:1-18:13). And as I read through those accounts I see only one who left immediately after breaking bread... and that was Judas... His bitter, disloyal, and self-absorbed betrayer. The faithful disciples stayed, and lingered, and listened, and learned. They benefitted and grew from the things which their Lord and Savior then taught, and said, and did. By staying, they were being strengthened for their battle against Satan. While Judas – a disciple too I might add – simply left; and then lacking the benefit of such things as he could have gained if he'd been listening and learning from Jesus at each and every such opportunity, simply self-destructed instead, in his pursuit of personal gain.

This is one reason why I love how the ESV translates what the Apostle Peter (who was one of the ones who obviously didn't leave that evening right after the communion) later wrote in 2 Ptr. 1:2-11:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more

diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

While communion is crucial, please note that the accumulation and even acceleration of all of the above-mentioned elements are also essential! It seems pretty clear (at least to me) that one who is consistently “coming only for communion and then leaving,” is violating this passage completely. They are not making it their main priority to gain that essential greater knowledge, nor are they making every effort they possibly can to continually increase in that knowledge, nor are they being as diligent as they possibly can to make their calling and election sure... are they? And if they are consistently putting other things first on Sunday by only coming to worship, partaking of communion and then leaving to go do something else, it would seem to me that they have also missed the first and second greatest commandments... wouldn't it to you (Matt. 22:34-40)?

And besides, speaking of due diligence in the acquisition, accumulation, and acceleration of all of those essential items, what about Acts 2:42 wherein we see the four elements that the new church members there in Jerusalem DEVOTED themselves to? It wasn't just “the breaking of bread,” but they were **just as diligently and equally devoted** to prayer, fellowship, and the apostle's teaching as they were to communion... and those are all equally essential elements that one sacrifices instead of devoting themselves to during our worship assemblies, when they show up only for communion and then leave as well.

Now please let me say also, that I can understand where once in a great, great while, and under definitely distasteful and/or unavoidable circumstances (such as perhaps being sick or something), one has to leave right after communion. I get that. And I believe God certainly does too. That's not what we're discussing here.

What we are discussing, is when one continually, consistently,

persistently and premeditatedly makes this a preferred habit or practice. And God's word addresses that pretty well (See Hebrews 10:24-31). One does not need to willfully miss the assembly altogether in order to be considered by God as having "forsaken" it. After all, consider that a person who abandons their lawfully wedded spouse, having actually been "in the marriage," is also said to have "forsaken" their spouse and the marriage which they were already invested and involved in at the time. Likewise, to continually and willfully leave the worship assembly one is already involved in while it's still in session because one has "better things to do," would also fit into the category of "forsaking" the assembly as well, and subsequently fall under the condemnation of Hebrews 10:24-31. It's just that one way you don't attend at all, while the other way you do, but then "forsake," or leave it, before its finished... dangerous stuff. Solomon additionally addressed just such as applies to either scenario, and at least one reason why those who depart and forsake them so often do in Proverbs 18:1 (which see).

The apostle Paul also addressed the practice of those people who were apparently placing approximately the same priority on the pursuit of the things of the world as they were on the partaking of communion in the very passage from whence we get the word "communion" – and it wasn't pretty for the people who practiced it (please see: 1 Cor. 10:14-22)!

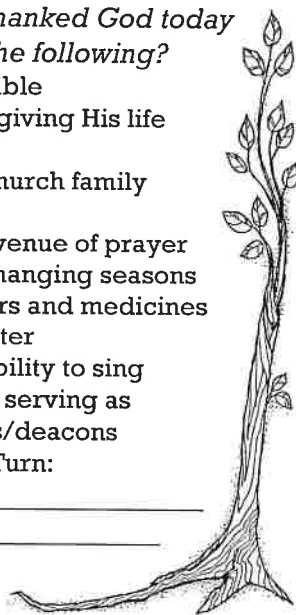
In closing, let us not forget our favorite illustration when it comes to presumptuous, selfish, self-serving "checklist religion" which never reaches the heart, and which therefore nauseates and disgusts God (Rev. 3:14-20): the Pharisees (Matthew 23). Those who willfully, continually, and premeditatedly make it their practice to come to worship only to take communion because it's "on the list" (Acts 20:7) and then leave, really need go back and re-read and re-consider Matthew 23, and exactly what Jesus had to say to the "checklist" religious people of His day... (Hebrews 13:8).

Doug Dingley

God gave you a gift of
86,400
 seconds today. Have
 you used one to say
THANK YOU?

*Have you thanked God today
 for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Jobs
- The avenue of prayer
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- Laughter
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



This bulletin is published by the
WELLSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST

92 Rose Cottage Lane
 Wellsburg, WV 26070
 304-737-1422

<http://www.truthandright.org>



Like us on
FACEBOOK under
 Wellsburg church
 of Christ!

Follow us on **TWITTER**
 @wellsburgchurch



View us on **YOUTUBE:**
[https://www.youtube.com/
 user/wellsburgchurch](https://www.youtube.com/user/wellsburgchurch)

Qualities of Overseers

J B K G P V C Q H U S B A N D S W L W O
 U O E C M C P R E J F T S R D O J T W S
 K S H R I O U T S I D E R S E Q H R O L
 I K F A A N T X F L V A X Q X J U U I E
 Q R M F C V Z L F T F B B K L K A S Q E
 P A O O P E M J P C D U E V U F G T A W
 P E E U Z R P Y H W M I Y N K K L W I E
 L E E T R T K B F H M P I S R K N O K E
 S A V J O N T S T N M C C S E D O R D B
 W Z U J J J T H L T Z X F V P R B T U B
 K M L M J A F N C P M M R E R U L H W N
 Z Z W M L N H O I X M O I M O N E Y Q B
 I J I D Z M F J W D U O M A A K K W H L
 A B O U U I V N Q I L Z V N C A A A S G
 T B S Q H U S M J G Y Y N A H R G C K T
 G W O R U T L A T N H H V G F D Y Z J V
 F P J G B O W E E I P G N E L H S O V T
 K Y C W C R C O N T R O L L E D E D N S
 R A Q W Z K Y T V Y I H H Z Z Z Z Y S Z
 I Q V R L U A A E C H U R C H T U R A S
 U Q I H H J K D A T X W A W I O F Y R W

DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

1 Tim. 3:1, the saying is _____, if anyone aspires to the office...

1 Tim. 3:1, ...of overseer, he desires a _____ task

1 Tim. 3:2, Therefore an overseer must be above _____,

1 Tim. 3:2, the _____ of one wife, sober-minded,

1 Tim. 3:2, self-_____, respectable, hospitable, able to teach

1 Tim. 3:3, not a _____, not violent but gentle,

1 Tim. 3:3, not quarrelsome, not a lover of _____.

1 Tim. 3:4, He must _____ his own household well...

1 Tim. 3:4, with all _____ keeping his children submissive,

1 Tim. 3:5, his own household, how will he care for God's _____?

1 Tim. 3:6, He must not be a recent _____, or he may become puffed up

1 Tim. 3:7, Moreover, he must be well thought of by _____.