

Di223 We Believe

Lesson Di223-15 Paul's Teaching About Communion

In our last lesson we learned that Communion is a memorial established by Jesus. The purpose was to remember his shed blood and broken body sacrificed on the Cross for our salvation. Communion is a sacred object lesson that Jesus commanded all believers to partake of “until he comes” (1Cor 11:26). Communion is a public testimony that Christ died for our sins. When we take the bread and the wine, we are affirming our faith in Jesus Christ. He is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). We are also affirming that Jesus will someday return for those who love him.

Who should take Communion? Communion does not save us. Only Christians should take Communion. Only those who are saved from sin can appreciate the sacrifice Jesus made for us. They are now brothers and sisters, part of the body of Christ. As we take these symbols, we remember his sacrifice and thank him for loving us enough to suffer death for our sins.

The apostle Paul met the resurrected Jesus in a vision, while he was traveling on the Damascus Road from Jerusalem. The purpose of his trip was to find people who were at that time called ‘Followers of the Way.’ He planned to take them as prisoners back to Jerusalem. Paul sincerely believed that the Christ-followers were part of a false religion. As a Jew, he was sure that God was displeased with them and that he must stop the ‘heresy.’

As Paul neared the city of Damascus, a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:1-5). “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:16-18).

Saul became the apostle Paul as a result of this Damascus Road experience where he saw the Lord Jesus. As a result, he became a missionary to the Gentiles to lead them to salvation in Christ. In this missionary role, Paul and his companions planted churches in Greece, Rome and cities in Asia Minor. He taught the new converts the teachings and commandments of Christ, including the importance and seriousness of taking Communion.

How should we take Communion? In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul corrects the congregation for their abuse of the Lord’s Supper. They were taking it in an unworthy or careless manner. Because the Lord’s Supper took place first, together with a Passover meal, the Corinthians continued to observe it with a meal. This caused divisions among them. Some were feasting and not offering anything to the poorer members of the congregation who had nothing to eat. They were not acting like the Church—the body of Christ. They were doing something unworthy of Jesus’ love on the Cross for everyone. The purpose of Communion is remembering and celebrating the death of Jesus. Paul told them to eat together and let the love of Christ fill their hearts for each other. Paul

instructs the believers to do their feasting at home. Then they should observe the Lord's sacrifice in a simple ceremony where all partake equally of the bread and the drink. Paul also advised the Corinthian believers to examine themselves and repent of any known sin. Then they would not be taking the Lord's Supper unworthily nor drinking judgment on themselves (1Cor 11:18-29).

When we take Communion, we recognize the importance of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. These are symbolized by the bread and the drink. We confess all known sin and give thanks for our salvation. We act in loving ways to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Often as we remember Christ's death for our sins, we experience healing for the body as well as the soul. "The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Taking Communion becomes a blessing as we look forward to Christ's coming and receive his healing and grace.

This lesson is **important** because the principles in Paul's teaching on Communion help us as we take the Lord's Supper in our day.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Communion was established by Jesus for believers to remember and celebrate his death on the Cross. Communion is not to be taken lightly. It should be done with repentance of any known sin and in the love of Christ for each member of the body of Christ.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Who should take Communion? [Pause.]
A. If you answered, "All believers who trust in Christ as their Savior," you are correct.
2. Does taking Communion save us? [Pause.]
A. If you answered, "No, Communion does not save us," you answered correctly.
3. What does Paul's warning not to take Communion in an unworthy manner mean? [Pause.]
A. If you answered that Paul meant not to take Communion with known sin in our lives or lack of love for our fellow Christians, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to continue memorizing our seventh *Statement of Faith*: "We believe the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Christ's suffering and death, and a prophecy of his Second Coming. Christ commanded all believers to take Communion 'until he comes.'" Your verse to memorize is "The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Share with members of your family the purposes and meaning of Communion.

Review all seven *Statements of Faith* until you can say them from memory:

Statement #1: We believe the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God. They are the revelation of God to man, the unchanging rule of faith and conduct.

Statement #2: We believe the one true God has revealed himself as the eternal Creator of heaven and earth and the Savior of mankind. He has further revealed himself as one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Statement #3: We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures by his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, his death on the Cross, his bodily resurrection from the dead, and his position at the right hand of God.

Statement #4: We believe that human beings were created in the image of God for a loving relationship with him. They chose to disobey God, however, and thus experienced physical death and separation from God.

Statement #5: We believe mankind's only hope of salvation is through the shed blood of Jesus, the Son of God. The gift of eternal life is received when we repent of our sins and confess our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Statement #6: We believe water baptism by immersion is commanded of all who repent and believe on Christ as Savior. Water baptism is a witness to the world that we have died to sin and been raised to new life in Christ.

Statement #7: We believe the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Christ's suffering and death, and a prophecy of his Second Coming. Christ commanded all believers to take Communion until he comes.