

Closed Communion: What We Believe

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I Corinthians 11:17-34:

"Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come."

INTRODUCTION

Historic Baptists, true Baptists, have believed in and still believe in closed communion. Baptists impose upon themselves the same restrictions that they impose on others concerning the Lord's Supper. Baptists insist that it is the Lord's table, not theirs; and He alone has the right to say who shall sit at His table.

No amount of so called brotherly love, or ecumenical spirit, should cause us to invite to His table those who have not complied with the requirements laid down plainly in His inspired Word.

Should we as Baptists ignore the restrictions made by our Lord and Master? NO! When we hold to the restrictions placed upon the Lord's Supper by our Master, we are defending the *"faith which was once delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3).

That the Lord's Supper is rigidly restricted will appear in the following facts:

IT IS RESTRICTED AS TO PLACE

A. I Corinthians 11:18 says, *"When ye come together in the church."* This does not mean the church building; they had none. In other words, when the church assembles. The supper is to be observed by the church, in church capacity. Again this does not mean the church house. Ekklesia, the Greek word for church, means assembly. *"When ye come together in the church,"* is when the church assembles.

B. When we say church we mean an assembly of properly baptized believers. Acts 2:41-42: *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

The church is made up of saved folks who are baptized by immersion. In the Bible belief precedes baptism. That's the Bible way.

Acts 2:41:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts 8:12-13, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

When we say properly baptized, we mean immersed. No unbeliever should have the

supper, and no non-immersed believer should have the supper. Those who are sprinkled are not baptized and cannot receive the supper. The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo*, and it always means to immerse.

"In every case where communion is referred to, or where it may possibly have been administered, the believers had been baptized (Acts 2:42; 8:12,38; 10:47; 6:14-15; 18:8; 20:7; etc.). Baptism comes before communion, just as repentance and faith precede baptism". (Hamilton)

C. The Lord's Supper is for baptized believers in church capacity: "*When ye come together in the church,*" again not a building but the assembly of the properly baptized believers.

D. The fact that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, to be observed in church capacity, is pointed out by the fact that it is for those who have been immersed and added to the fellowship of the church (Acts 2:41-42).

E. The Lord's Supper is never spoken of in connection with individuals. When it is referred to it is only referred to in reference to baptized believers in local church capacity (Acts 2:42-44; I Cor. 11:20-26). Again I want to quote Dr. W. W. Hamilton,

"The individual administration of the ordinance has no Bible warrant and is only a relic of Romanism. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, and anything which goes beyond or comes short of this fails for want of scriptural example or command".

The practice of taking a little communion kit to hospitals, nursing homes, etc. is unscriptural for these practices do not follow the scriptural example.

IT IS RESTRICTED TO A UNITED CHURCH

A. The Bible in I Cor. 11:18 is very strong in condemning divisions around the Lord's table.

("For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.").

There were no less than four divisions in the Corinthian church.

I Cor. 1:12: "*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.*"

Because of these divisions, it was impossible for them to scripturally eat the Lord's Supper. Deep division in the local church is reason to hold off observing the Lord's Supper.

B. At this point, I want to ask these questions: Are there not doctrinal divisions among the many denominations? It is not our doctrinal differences that cause us to be separate religious bodies?

IT IS RESTRICTED BY DOCTRINE

A. Those in the early church at Jerusalem who partook *"continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine"* (Acts 2:42).

B. Those who do not hold to apostolic truth are not to partake. This means there is to be discipline in the local body. How can you discipline those who do not belong to the local body? You can't. The clear command of scripture is to withdraw fellowship from those who are not doctrinally sound.

II Thes 3:6: *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."*

Rom. 16:17: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."*

C. To commune together means to have the same doctrine.

I John 1:3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."*

II Thes. 2:15: *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."*

II John 10-11: *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."*

Friend, you cannot honestly say that you can have open communion and have the same doctrine.

CONCLUSION

It is wrong for us to declare that our doctrinal beliefs are one at the table and then continue in our separate church capacities to maintain the difference in our faith.