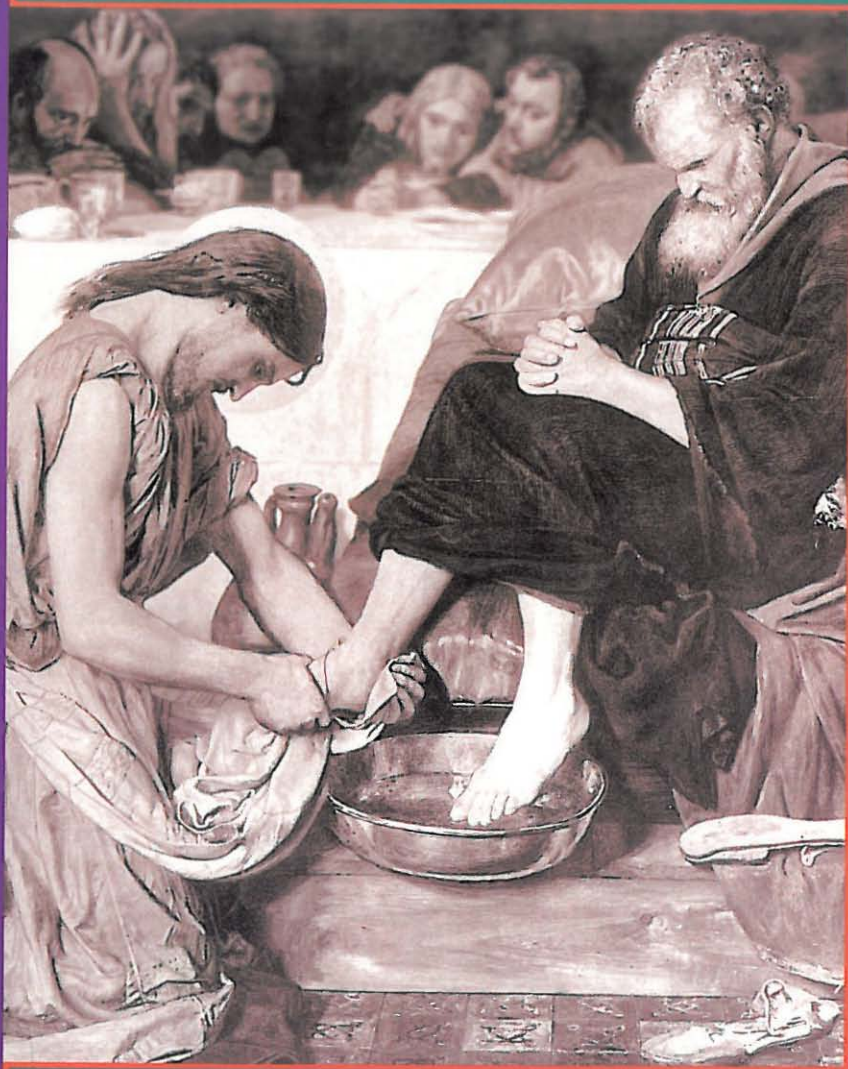


In Remembrance of Me

Thoughts on the Communion Service



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Chapter Three

The Commandments of Communion

General John B. Gordon was campaigning for a seat in the United States Senate. When the time came for his name to be placed in nomination, the voting body included a former Army comrade. Because of a resentment that had developed between the two men over the years, the general knew he could not expect the support of his fellow officer in his bid to become a senator. However, as the balloting started, the other man found his attention drawn to General Gordon, who was seated on the platform. Suddenly his eyes fell upon the scar on the general's face, a mark of his bravery.

Immediately the old soldier felt stricken with remorse. As he saw this mark of sacrifice and pain, he exclaimed with great emotion, "I cannot be against him. I had forgotten the scars."

We must never forget the scars of Jesus. To help us remember the great sacrifice He made for us, He instituted the Lord's Supper. Paul writes about this in the following words:

"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

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is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. . . . 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" (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

A misunderstanding of this passage of Scripture has caused some Christians to avoid Communion because they feel unworthy. The word "unworthily" in verse 27 is not an adjective describing a person as being unworthy. Rather it is an adverb modifying an action—an improper way of taking or participating in the Lord's Supper.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:21, 22, some people in the church at Corinth had lost sight of the true meaning of the Lord's Supper. They had turned it into a banquet, with each person bringing their own food. The rich would get together in a clique and feast, while some of the poorer members didn't have enough to eat and had to watch hungrily. Thus they were taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner because they did not recognize in it the significance of the symbol of the Lord's body. "Discerning the Lord's body" is the key to the whole passage (verse 29).

Paul says that we should do three things at this sacred service.

First, we should search our motives, character, and behavior. "Let a man examine himself" (verse 28). We are not to judge another, but to look into our own hearts and lives and see that everything is all right between ourselves and our families, and between ourselves and our fellow church members. Each of us should examine our hearts to see that everything is all right between us and our Lord. If it is not, we should sincerely ask God's forgiveness. And we can rest assured that He does forgive us.

Second, Paul says we should discern, or recognize, the

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Lord's body. In verse 29 he states that this is essential in participating in the Lord's Supper.

We see in its bread the sacred symbol of the body of Jesus—that body beaten, bruised, and nailed to the cross of Calvary for you and me. In the wine, the pure juice of the grape, we recognize the sacred symbol of His blood shed for us when the Roman soldiers beat His back with cruel thongs, placed the crown of thorns upon His head, pierced His side, and nailed His hands and feet to the wooden beams of the cross.

When we have examined our motivations and discerned the Lord's body in the emblems, Paul then tells us to do something else. The third thing he commands us to do is to partake of those sacred emblems. "So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (verse 28). Jesus declared, "This do . . . in remembrance of me" (verse 25). He did not say maybe, or perhaps, if you feel like it. Rather He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

As a pastor in Scotland served Communion, an aged woman hesitated to receive it because she felt unworthy. Sensing her feelings, he said, "Take it, woman. It's for sinners." And indeed it is—for sinners pardoned and saved by grace.

Some people don't seem to realize that when they refuse Communion, they are disobeying one of the Lord's commandments. He says, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

"None should exclude themselves from the Communion. . . . *Every* disciple is called upon to participate publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Saviour. It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. . . . All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 656).