

Why Primitive Baptists Do Not Practice Open Communion

When Jesus first started the church all the denominations which we see today were non-existent. All commandments regarding the ordinances were written for the local churches or assemblies of that day. Paul addresses the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:1-2). Paul, of course, through inspiration, addresses many churches in the Romans letter (Rom. 16:1, 16). The whole book of Acts was about the disciples, the first church. (1 Cor. 12:28). Their acts were mighty and many other gifts were added along with many people. The apostles started many churches. All of the New Testament was addressed to these churches, which Christ started during his earthly ministry. (Matt. 16:18, 18:15-20). His kind of church was only one body, led by one spirit, with one harmonizing doctrine, with only one Lord, one water baptism, and one God, who is none other than Jesus (ref. Eph. 4:3-6). Jesus promised that His kind of church (assembly) would exist in perpetuity and in truth in every generation. (Matt. 16:18; Eph.3:21; Matt.28:19,20; Daniel 2:44,45; Matt.3:1,2; 4:17,18) All the gospels, the epistles and even the last book of the Bible were addressed to his blessed Church (churches). It actually means the Church is the most important thing in the world. (Eph. 3:21).

Don't you wish all God's children would come home, to understand salvation by grace. It will be a glorious scene in Heaven one day when we eat the supper again with our Lord Jesus Christ as the Church triumphant.

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29)

But now many of God's children live immoral and heretical lives and as God's church we should not eat the Lord's Supper with them.

1. We should not practice open communion because of immorality

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (for the whole context, read 1 Cor. 5:1-11)

God wants his church to be holy in moral etiquette. Even Israel of old was told that their country as a nation was to be holy. (Deut. 7:6) Read 1 Peter 2:9-10, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into the marvellous light: which in time past, were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy ." Peter is talking to the Jew as well as the Gentile church. (1 Pet. 5:17)

The word 'peculiar' in Peter is equivalent to the word 'special' in Deuteronomy. (Deut. 7:6; 26:18)

Peter also says, "... be ye holy; for I am holy." (1Pet.1:16) Again he is talking to the church. (1Pet. 5:17) I could belabor the point of how God commands his church to be sanctified and holy but I will simply allow the Bible to speak.

For a reference in holiness in the church, Paul wrote Eph. 5:1-13. (Verse 7, Be not ye therefore partakers with them.)

Why, if we allowed open communion anyone could take the Lord's supper and corrupt our churches even more. Jude 12 wrote of those who come in and bring immorality and corrupt our feasts. Many times God's churches allow too much or people sneak in with bad morals. (Rev. 2:14, 16, 20)

2. That we cannot practice open communion because of false doctrine.

"Now we beseech ye brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (Rom. 16:17)

God loves the truth, therefore God seekth such to worship him. (John 4:23) God loves the truth so much that he has promised that the truth would be in the world for every generation. (Ps. 100:5). Every generation includes me and my children and their children and all the people on earth before us. Truth is so important to God that he started an organization called the Church. Paul by inspiration wrote to young pastor Timothy, *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."* (1 Tim. 3:15). He loved that church so much that he gave her rules and regulations, as how to keep the truth in her and false doctrine out of her. (2 Tim. 3:16; 4:1-2; Eph. 4:11-14).

Here are a few more verses that actually tell us to avoid and separate ourselves from false doctrine. Jesus himself said in Matt. 7:15, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."*

The church at Galatia was warned in chapter 1:8, *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* He repeated this command in verse 9 which shows he is very interested in us obeying this command.

Paul, writing to the church of Thessalonica, said, *"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."* (11Thes. 3:14-15)

"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." (Titus 3:10-11)

"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." (2 John 10,11)

When the Bible through inspiration tells us to mark, avoid, let him be accursed, note that man and have no company, reject, receive him not, not to company with, beware of, not to eat with... does that mean somehow it is acceptable to take communion with him? I trow not. Many of the ways to keep false out and true in is to obey the Scripture. Since all the New Testament was written about, for and to the Church (churches), we cannot just cast away God's wisdom and call it antiquated.

Many of God's churches have refused to implement simple scripture and end up like the churches in Revelation. Judgment and condemnation along with the removal of the church is promised. (Rev. 2-3)

I admit that it seems hard to do these simple truths found in scripture just as it is hard to discipline children in the home. Our society, though, is falling apart because of the lack of understanding any discipline at all. It is easier to just sit back, watch t.v. and let the kids make their own decisions. This philosophy, however, leads to drugs, alcohol, sex, crime, neglect and a filthy society. The church of God has become filthy because it seems too hard to deal with difficult church members and false doctrines. It seems easier to sweep it under the rug and just leave well enough alone. Remember God commands his church to be holy (for I am holy).

3. We cannot practice open communion because of judgement

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he comes. 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." (1 Cor. 11:26-34)

The two preceding points should be enough to encourage God's church, along with the deacons and pastors, to practice close communion and not allow open communion. This next point should prompt God's children to exercise discipline in their own lives and in the local church even more. Because the Bible says to let a man examine himself (v. 28). Individual church members are to examine or scrutinize, try or test, one's motives and actions as to what the scripture dictates according to what is right or wrong. It is not about how you feel, but what the Bible says. Do you measure up to what God's word subscribes? Are you living a holy godly biblical lifestyle? Again, this commandment is to church members only. This does not allow for people who do not agree with us or who are living an immoral lifestyle. Or those who are not baptized into our Primitive Baptist Church. This verse is to that primitive church at Corinth. There were no other denominations or churches that existed at this time in history.

When I examine myself, I find that I am such a sinner. It seems to me that I do not deserve to take the Lord's supper. First, if you think you deserve to take the Lord's supper, you probably shouldn't take it. One of the first doctrines we learn as Primitive Baptists is the doctrine of total depravity. The only way we deserve to take the Lord's supper is because Christ paid for our sins. Every church member struggles with the fact that we are sin infested. When we are thinking correctly about ourselves we would agree with the Apostle Paul, who said, *"when I would do good, evil is present with me."* (Rom. 7:21) We are all false and full of sin, as the old song says. It is only through the finished work of Jesus Christ that we can commune and remember the Lord's death. I think we can rule out as a reason for not taking the Lord's supper

that I feel evil, because even the apostle Paul again said, "I am the chief of sinners." (1 Tim. 1:15).

Christ though, does not want us as church members to come to his table believing in false doctrine, immorality and the actual practicing of lies and scandal in our hearts toward anybody or toward the church. A humble and a broken heart is what God desires toward his word and people when we come to the supper. (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:3-5, 18:1-6). Judas Iscariot is a prime example of one who came to the supper with a scandal and deceit in his life. Look what happened to him. He was only interested in taking advantage of God's little church even if it meant betrayal of Jesus himself. You and I could sin against the body and blood of Christ, maybe not the same sin but just as corrupt, and bring damnation (judgement) upon our body, soul, spirit and eventually upon our church.

If we eat the bread and drink the cup unworthily we will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. What does that mean? May I offer as simple an explanation as possible. If we come to the table with scandal and deceit in our heart it shows that we have forgotten what the Lord has done for us as children of God. It's like slapping Jesus in the face and crucifying him all over again. We have forgotten that we are purged from our old sins. (11Pet.1:9) We start to disrespect the whole purpose for which God started the church and created new life in us. We become like the churches in Revelations who left there first love allowed immorality and false doctrine in and became guilty of forgetting about the body and blood of Christ.

In the rush of our daily lives, I know how hard it is to look these verses up so I want to put them down to explain what verse 27 and 29 of 1Cor.11 means. *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:26-31)

You can tell how much these verses in Hebrews agree with 1 Corinthians 11: 27 and 29. That's the reason that verse 28 says that a man should examine himself, because God will judge him if he doesn't judge himself. The tragedy happens when judgement comes in many forms.

1. (One form of judgement is mental instability. (1Cor. 11: 30)

Judas is a prime example.

(Heb. 10:27 ...but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation...)

We may fool the little church, but we cannot fool God, because he is omniscience omnipresent and omnipotent. You may trick others for awhile, but judgement is eminent and sure with God and his word. Even more than one person may hide a scandal from brothers and sisters in the church. Even pastors and deacons, can be tricked for awhile. But be sure, God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). Mental judgement is further expressed in 1 John 4:17, 18: *"Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgement; because as he is, so are we in this*

world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." The word torment means painful disquietude.

We are glad to say, though, that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart. (1 John 3:18-21)

God has chosen tools to get right with him, which are confession, repentance and faith. Although, depending on the seriousness of the crime, you may have to suffer awhile, as in the church of first Corinthians 11:30. I'm not suggesting that all sickness or mental distress is the result of sin. The book of Job protests against such notions. John 5:14 would suggest however that many sicknesses and distresses are due to sin.

2. (Second) form of judgement is physical sickness added onto mental instability.

Let me give you a few examples of physical judgement. Miriam, Moses' sister, spoke out against Moses' and became leprous. (Num. 12)

David became mentally and physically disabled after Nathan the prophet told David of his sin. Psalm 51 is one of the results of his sin. Thankfully Psalm 51 shows both the debilitating effect of sin and the cure for broken hearts. King David, though, had to suffer the rest of his life for this sin he had committed. For the sword never left David's house. (2 Sam. 12:10).

3. (Third) form of judgement is bodily death. Ananias and Sapphira is a prime example of this. (Acts 5:1-11)

Look at the churches in the book of Revelation chapters (2-3). Because many sins that arose and false doctrines, God commends their virtues, exposes their sins and threatens judgement upon those who do not repent. As far as I know, none of these churches exist as true gospel churches today. Could it be that we in America have become so worldly with our lives and churches that the candlestick is about to be removed?

In conclusion, I believe that the church is the most important thing to God in the world, (Eph. 3:21) and that we need to put her first in our lives. When we put the true church first in our lives we are putting God and his kingdom first. (Matt. 6:33) The ordinances which God has given us are for remembering what Christ has done for us as long as his bride is upon earth. His bride of course is none other than his church. (Eph. 5:25-33)

Yours truly,

Elder Mike Mullins