

Who can break bread?

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Well, I suppose if there's one question that we have divided the meetings and divided Christians since Pentecost, particularly in the last few years, it has been the question, who should break bread? Or, who can break bread? And so this afternoon, in the allotted space that I have, we're going to refer as much as we can to the Word of God. Firstly, I want to suggest that every single person should break bread. Every single person should be remembering the Lord. And the reason for that is, is that [00:01:08] God has given a commandment to everyone, to everyone in this room, to everyone in Catford, to everyone in this world, to repent and accept the work of his beloved Son. Acts 16, 31. God has commanded we should respond. But as we all know, in the world in which we live, we find, very often like Elijah, that the vast majority of our friends, or a vast majority of those that we meet with, have never responded to God's call to repent. And I'll add to what Andrew said, has everyone in this room responded to the call to repent of your sins and to believe [00:02:05] the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and to become a saved person, a born-again person, and as we've already had before us, a member of the body of Christ. And so from a very, very wide circle of those who should break bread, we narrow it down to those who have the privilege of breaking bread, are those who have responded to the command of God, who have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, are part of the body of Christ, you are the ones that should and can break bread. I wonder if there's those here that are in this second group. You have trusted the Lord as your Saviour, you know you're born again, you know that you're part of the body, but as yet do not [00:03:04] respond to the request of the Lord Jesus to remember him. That's the first challenge.

Now of that group that should break bread, and of that second group that can break bread, we find that there are certain scriptures which teaches us that there are those who are truly born again, are on their way to heaven, and yet because of their walk, which is inconsistent with the Word of God, they are unable to remember the Lord to break bread. Now we've already quoted that 1 Corinthians chapter 5, and if you turn to the verse, 1 Corinthians 5, it is reported commonly, verse 1, that there is fornication among you, and such fornication is not so much as named [00:04:06] amongst the Gentiles, and then in verse 13, therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. At Corinth, there was a believer. Let us get this straight at the very beginning, that the person that we're talking about in Corinthians chapter 5 was a believer. The person that we're talking about in 1 Corinthians 5 has been with Christ for 1,900 years plus. He never stopped being a believer, and yet as he was moving through this scene, he fell into sin, a moral sin. What it was, as we could find as we read through, is obviously his father had remarried, and this, [00:05:05] he's the father's son, was having an

affair with his stepmother, and the Apostle Paul writes to him and says, this is something that ought not to be amongst the Christian company, and to put it absolutely bluntly, what Paul is saying, that sexual intercourse between the unmarried is out for the Christian company, and Paul tells them very, very straight what they should do, that that person had to be put out from amongst the company. We read the verse, he actually says, put away from among you that wicked person. In spite of the fact that he is a believer, in spite of the fact that he's going to heaven, his walk was such as it was a damage into the testimony, it was damaging to the company at Corinth, and it was not for the glory of the Lord Jesus. And so we [00:06:06] find that there are certain people that because of their walk, they are not in a right condition to remember the Lord, to break bread. But then we move on and we find, it was very ably mentioned by Andrew, that when we come into 2nd Timothy, we find there that there were those who said that the resurrection had already passed. If the first group are ones that were morally wrong, in their walk they were wrong, in the second company we find there were those who doctrinally were wrong. They held truths about the person or the work of the Lord Jesus, which was fundamental against the [00:07:03] Christian position. And it is quite clear that the Apostle Paul would say that these people we cannot walk with. Now you will have noticed there is a big difference between what we get in Corinthians and what we get in 2nd Timothy. In Corinthians, written in the early days of the church, it was quite possible for the little company that was at Corinth to put out the person that was walking in an immoral way. But when we get to 2nd Timothy, the church period has moved on several years, and we find that within that company there were a great deal who held defective doctrine. So what are we going to do? If I'm in a church, if I'm in an assembly where everybody else believes a truth, believes a doctrine which I consider to be wrong, if everybody in the church [00:08:07] that I was, let's say for instance, believed that the Lord could sin, what could I do? Carry on with it? Put them all out? It would be impossible for me to put them out. And so according to 2nd Timothy, I moved out myself. The statement is given that if we purge ourselves from those that hold this evil doctrine, we shall be a vessel to honour meat for the Master's use. So we find that the second quality, the second thing that is required of those that remember the Lord is that our doctrine is pure. There may be some that will bring questions about different types of doctrine that we might have, and we don't all agree on various things. Some of us would disagree perhaps on [00:09:06] baptism, some of us may disagree on the aspects of the Lord's coming. But the point that I think he's brought out, which is things which are fundamental. If we deny the resurrection, the Apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15, we have denied the faith, and our faith is vain. And things that affect the person and the work of the Lord Jesus are absolutely fundamental and are absolutely vital as far as our Christian fellowship is concerned. And so we have those that are walking in a way which is morally wrong. And then we have those which are holding doctrines which are against the teaching of Scripture. Let us take another example. If a person said that the whole of the Word of God was not inspired by the Spirit of God, would you carry [00:10:06] on with them? Could we carry on with them? I'm absolutely confident that if we are to obey the Word of God, we could not carry on with anybody who denied the inspiration of all the Scriptures. And there are many, many different doctrines which we would have to separate from if we are to be true to the teaching of the Word of God. But then we come to the third reason, and perhaps this is the reason that most people will say, well, I don't see it. But I personally think it is the clearest of the three. And that is the question of association with evil. In the second epistle of John, John writes to a sister and he says to her, he says, if somebody comes to your door and they bring a doctrine which [00:11:04] is not of Christ, and you say to them, you bid them Godspeed, you say, have a good day. John says, not me, John says, you are a partaker of their evil deeds. And if we're in an assembly where there are those that hold doctrine contrary to the Word of God, if we're in an assembly where there are those who are walking morally wrong, what is our position? Do we stay in that assembly and speak against it? Is that what the scriptures would teach us? The scripture would teach us, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. So if there's moral evil,

the whole assembly becomes level. If there's doctrinal evil, the same thing applies. The statement is from 1 Corinthians and Galatians, we get the same references, a little leaven [00:12:01] leaveneth the whole lump. And if we are associated with that, we too are leavened. There is an interesting verse, and you will see on the notes, there were a number of verses that refer to this. In Haggai, there is the question asked in relation to the priest and the Haggai 2.13, the question is asked about a priest and whether it takes place in the church in something that is unclean, would he be holy and vice versa. We get there, clearly brought forth this idea that association with evil defiles. So there are three things that we should apply to ourselves and ask ourselves the question, is there in my life that which is morally wrong? We mention fornication because that is what is mentioned in 1 Corinthians [00:13:02] but you will notice also if we read down that chapter, there are other things which we might not think are quite as bad but the word of God says they are and if we are habitually a drunkard, it is publicly known we should not be in fellowship. If we are doing something which is dishonouring to the company and the testimony, we should not be in fellowship. And if we hold doctrines which are contrary to the word of God, as I hope we have seen from 2 Timothy, we too should not be in fellowship. But then if we are associated, if we are linked with those that do such, we too should question our position of fellowship. Now on the notes it says, I believe it is important that as we have already had before us, the Apostles in Acts [00:14:07] chapter 2, they continued steadfast in the Apostles doctrine, fellowship, prayers and the breaking of bread. Adding to these things that we have had already, I think that one of the important things, our life should be a continuous Christianity. There is no good having Christianity on the Lord's day and the rest of the week we can do as we like. And this is not something that I can judge but each one of us individually, we have to judge our own lives as to how we act during the rest of the week. Are we consistent with the truth that we have and with what we express on a Lord's day morning? Here are challenges that each one of us has to look at and has to think about. And the second and the next [00:15:02] point was, who decides after all?

I would suggest that any decisions that are made as to whether we can break bread, must come, first of all, from the Word of God. And if you are told by somebody that you are not fit to remember the Lord, let them return to the Scriptures and find the reason in the Scriptures. Because there may be many that have questions.

A brother was asked a few weeks ago, which meeting or which company shall I go to? And his reply was not, come where I am. His reply was, study the Scriptures, read through the [00:16:03] New Testament, particularly the epistles to the church, and there you will see the sort of company that we should go to. There you'll see the sort of company that the Lord would have us to be at. And when you've done that, go to that particular company. One of the problems that I feel that we have in our assemblies is that we tend to think that the breaking of bread is there for our convenience. We tend to think that if we have our friends and if our relatives come, it's much more convenient to take them along to the breaking of bread than to take them elsewhere. And I would suggest that we are having low thoughts of our Christian friends. As far as I'm concerned, if somebody before the Lord, having read through those New Testament Scriptures, come up with a conclusion that they believe [00:17:08] that the Baptist church is the place for them, why does that change when they come on holiday to my house? If you believe that it's right at Catford to have fellowship with the company that meets here, why would that change when you went to Lowestoft? Surely what Andrew has been bringing out in relation to the assemblies and the truth of assembly being responsible together would be clearly brought out in this time.

So that's all I've basically got to say.

The reasons why somebody can break bread. Who can break bread? You need, first of all, [00:18:01] to be saved. Acts 1 Corinthians 10, when we take the loaves, it's a picture, it speaks about of the one body. So the first conditions, the first thing that we can say is that you need, first of all, to be saved. Secondly, your life needs to be morally right. You need to be walking in a pathway which is right according to the Word of God. Thirdly, you need to be right in relation to the doctrines and the person of Christ. And fourthly, we should not be associated either with those that are holding evil doctrine or those who are morally wrong.

Now I expect there are plenty of questions, if not about what I've said, about the connotations from what was said. Perhaps, do you want to raise them now or later?

[00:19:10] I've got a quick question. In Titus 3.10 it speaks about heretic. You have to reject him.

Wouldn't you put that as another category besides the three that you've had? Titus 3.10. Isn't that an additional reason for not allowing fellowship with the Christians? Because a heretic doesn't necessarily mean a false teacher, it just means a sectarian or an opinionated person. So he may be quite sound in doctrine, he may be sound morally, and he may not be associated with false, but he may be very strongly opinionated. Now according to Titus it says you've got to reject such a person. How do you see that in your little scheme? Let's say after the first and second abomination.

[00:20:10] Well while you're talking amongst yourselves, I'll give you what I gleaned. I have a note here which says there are seven steps before excommunication. The first one is Galatians 6.1.

If any man be overtaken by a fault, you it to spiritual restore. If someone has a fault, we wouldn't put them out of fellowship. The second one is 1 Thessalonians 5.14. You'll have to look that one up. The third one is 2 Thessalonians 3.6. The fourth one is 1 Timothy [00:21:03] 5.20. And the fifth one is Titus 3.10. And then the sixth one is Matthew 18.16-18 when you take it to the assembly. So excommunication from an assembly is a very, very serious matter.

And we certainly shouldn't put someone out of the assembly without very, very good reason. That probably doesn't answer your question. But put it in the box. Why didn't we speak?

Okay. In 1 Corinthians we have the case of the person being put out of fellowship. But [00:22:12] if we were to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 7, this is what the Apostle Paul said. 2 Corinthians 7 verse 8. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that I had done the wrong, that's the man who had sinned, nor for the cause that suffered wrong, that's his father, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. That's the assembly at Corinth. Paul writes to them and in the end he says, he carries on. What [00:23:05] Paul is saying in this letter, you were perfectly right when I wrote to you, you were sorrowful because I told you to put someone away. You obeyed, you put that person away, but now since that person has repented, he should be brought back into the assembly. And in this 7th chapter of 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul is telling them that that person should be put back, brought back and restored to the assembly. I think it is absolutely true that all discipline in the church, although primarily it's in order to maintain the holiness of the name of the Lord and his person, it's to maintain the holiness of the assembly, but it is also to restore that person and bring him back into the assembly. It's Galatians 6 verse 1.