

# Numbers Chapter 9

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Date: 11 August 2019

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] as normal. If you're here this morning, you'll know that normal means that most things go wrong, forget the hymn wrong, and we forget the offering bags, anything else. But by God's grace and goodness, we can be here to worship him. We do welcome you. It's good to have some visitors amongst us as well, as well as our own folk, and good to have some of our friends from Westcliffe as well along too. Usually we'd be having our open air service on a Sunday afternoon in August, but because the regatta's on today, that's why we're meeting as we are here. But next week, next week, God willing, if the weather is fine, we'll be meeting again in the Sunken Gardens on Westcliffe at 4pm. The rest of the meetings for the week you'll know about if you've got a new sheet and they'll tell you what's going on for the midweek.

As we gather together as God's people, we're gathering with all those who trust in the Lord Jesus around the world, even though they're not physically with us by the Spirit, we're worshipping them. But not just with them, but with all those saints who are in heaven who've gone before us, who are already enjoying the perfect presence of the Lord. And John the Apostle, when he was exiled on the island of Patmos, had this amazing insight into heaven's praise. Just listen to these words of Revelation chapter 5.

I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise.

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever.

[ 2 : 1 0 ] One day we're going to be there in that place of perfect worship. But, praise God, even though our worship is imperfect, we can bring it together with all God's people and we know that it is accepted because we bring it in Jesus' name.

So let's sing our first hymn, 142. Come let us join our cheerful songs with saints around the throne. 142. We'll stand as we sing this hymn together.

Our God, in prayer together, let us all pray. We thank you, our Father and our God, that as we come into your presence this evening, we come with cheerful songs, songs of praise, songs of thanksgiving, songs of joy, because we come again to you, the living and holy God, as those who are forgiven all our sins, those who have been made your children, those who have been adopted into your family, those, O Lord, who have your Holy Spirit dwelling within us, those, O Lord, who have your love constantly caring for us, those who stand in your grace, and we could go on and on throughout the whole night speaking of the blessings that we have through Jesus, your Son.

Thank you that we have, as Paul writes, every spiritual blessing in Christ. Lord, you haven't withheld from us any good thing. Thank you that you're not a God who's stingy or tight.

You're not a God who holds back. Not a God who is indeed one who is unwilling to give. For, Lord, when we look at your Son, the greatest gift you gave, we know, O Lord, that you will give us every good thing along with him.

[ 3 : 5 7 ] All the grace that we need, all the strength that we need, all the love that we need, all the help that we need, it's there, Lord, in Christ for us. Thank you that you are the God who is generous, who lavishly pours out into our lives good things.

Oh, help us ever to be grateful, ever to be thankful, help us, O Lord, to recognize these good things, that we might give you the praise and the worship and the glory that you deserve.

Forgive us that we forget the many benefits, O Lord, the many blessings that we have. Forgive us that when times are tough or things are difficult, that we're forgetful of you.

We're forgetful of what riches we have, that we might indeed know that we are children of the living, everlasting God, that we have, Lord, not only blessings here, so many, but, Lord, they're only the foretaste, they're only the start, they're only the starting course, as it were, of the banquet that you have for us in Christ, yet to come, when we shall be with all those saints, with all those of God's children in heaven, worshipping you in your presence.

Oh, what a day it will be when we shall be there. All pain will be gone, all sorrow will be gone, all suffering will be gone, and most of all, all sin will be gone.

[ 5 : 23 ] Oh, Lord, all that sin that tempts, that sin that causes so much sorrow and grief in our own lives, and the lives of those around about us, it'll all be gone, and we shall be made like Jesus, perfect and holy in your sight.

Oh, Lord, we pray that you would keep us going until that day. We pray, oh, Lord, that we might be faithful until that day, when you come again in glory. Lord, we find ourselves pressed in by the world.

We find ourselves stretched by the world. We find it difficult at times to live for you. We thank you for each Sunday, which is to us an oasis for our souls. But we pray that through the week, Monday to Saturday, we might also know, Lord, you're enabling and help to live in your presence, to enjoy fellowship with you, and, oh, Lord, to walk in your paths of righteousness.

Keep us from sinning, oh, Lord. Keep us from going astray, oh, Lord. Keep us when the temptations come thick and fast and the devil seems to be trying to trip us up.

Keep us, oh, Lord, in your ways, and make us to be the men and women of God that this town and this world needs, men and women of light and salt, men and women who are followers of Jesus.

[ 6 : 38 ] So, Lord, we thank you that you call us to meet together in this way, that you might bless us and strengthen us. And we pray that, indeed, as we hear your word preached, as we share together in prayer and in the singing of your praises, as we come together around the Lord's table, oh, Lord, we pray again that each part of this time together may not only bless us, but be praised to Jesus, in whose name we ask these things now.

Amen. Numbers and chapter 9. Numbers and chapter 9. If you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, that's page 145.

Page 145, Numbers and chapter 9. Before I had a break, we were looking together at Numbers in the evenings, perhaps a book that we wouldn't naturally turn to, but a book that's got such a lot which speaks forward into the New Testament and such a lot of help for us as well.

And so we're going to read chapter 9 of Numbers and then we're going to look at this together and seek to apply it with the Lord's help later on.

Numbers 9, verse 1. The Lord spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt.

[ 8 : 04 ] He said, Make the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. Celebrate it at the appointed time at twilight on the 14th day of this month in accordance with its rules and regulations.

So Moses told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover. And they did so in the desert of Sinai at twilight on the 14th day of the first month. The Israelites did everything just as the Lord commanded Moses.

But some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body. So they came to Moses and Aaron that same day and said to Moses, We have become unclean because of a dead body, but why should we be kept from presenting the Lord's offering with the Israelites at the appointed time?

Moses answered them, Wait until I find out what the Lord commands concerning you. Then the Lord said to Moses, Tell the Israelites, When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they are still to celebrate the Lord's Passover.

But they are to do it on the 14th day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones.

[ 9 : 30 ] When they celebrate the Passover, they must follow all the regulations. But if anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, they must be cut off from their people for not presenting the Lord's offering at the appointed time.

They will bear the consequences of their sin. A foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the Lord's Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations.

You must have the same regulations, both the foreigner and the native born. Part of the reason that we're going to be looking at this passage is because we're going to be sharing in what we call the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table this evening.

We would have normally done that once a month on the first Sunday in the evening or occasionally in the morning. But last Sunday afternoon, we had the open air. So I didn't want us to miss out on this opportunity of sharing in this wonderful means of grace.

And because this was my next passage in Numbers, I felt that it was the right timing. And I hope that as we go through this passage together, we'll see how appropriate it is to us.

[10:42] One of the things I want to stress is that this is for all believers. That the bread and the wine that we drink and eat is for each one who is trusting in and following the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And we'll see what that means and why we do that as we go through Numbers chapter 9. But if in your own heart and life you know that you're not a Christian, you know that you're not trusting Jesus as your Savior, that you don't believe he took your sin upon the cross.

And the Bible, as we shall see, warns us against taking of the bread and the wine. It does us no good. There's no magic in it. It's only as by faith we come and do this in obedience to Christ.

So as we go through God's word in a moment or two, please be prayerfully thinking. And hopefully, you'll be willing to share with us in this way. So we're going to sing another hymn together and then we're going to go straight to God's word.

and after that, we're going to go almost immediately into celebrating the Lord's Supper. It's a very serious thing. It's a very blessed thing. And it's something that the Lord has given us as we shall see.

[11:49] But let's sing together then our next hymn. It's number 846. Oh, for a closer walk with God, a calm and sweet refrain.

846. 846. 846. 846. 946. 946.

And if it's possible, and you've got more than two fingers, keep one finger in Numbers 9 and then turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. If you've got one of those little ribbons in your Bible, they're very helpful for that.

1 Corinthians and chapter 11. And we're going to read from verse 17 through to the end of the chapter. And hopefully you'll understand why as we read it.

If you, again, if you've got one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1152. 1,152.

[12:50] 1 Corinthians chapter 11, beginning at verse 17. In the following directives, I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.

In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you. And to some extent, I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

So then when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat. When you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

[13:57] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

That is why many among you are weak and ill and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world. So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.

[15:08] Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home so that when you meet together, it may not result in judgment. When I come, I'll give further instructions.

Let's pray together as we come to God's word. Lord, we thank you, O Lord, our God, that you have given us your word, your truth, that we might live by it and be blessed.

Thank you that all your instructions are for our good and for our encouragement, for our strengthening, for our protection. We pray, O Lord, that now as we think upon this portion of your word, particularly in its relevance to sharing in the Lord's Supper, we pray, O Lord, that you would guide us and lead us and give us insight.

We pray that you would speak not just to our minds but to our hearts and our souls as well, that, O Lord, your word may be pleasing to us and bring your blessing. For we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, who is the very word of God the Father.

Amen. Just a little introduction. Many of you will be aware of anyway. When we come to the Old Testament, we're not reading a different book from the New Testament.

[16:24] This Bible is one book. It has one author. It has one message. It has one purpose. Both what we call the Old and the New Testament are God's revelation of himself and of his will for us and for that reason we keep them in one volume.

At the very beginning, like in one sense a normal book, we have the beginning, Genesis, the introduction to God and to the world. And when we get to the last chapter, Revelation, we have the closing conclusion of how this world will end.

Between those pages is the whole of history from beginning to the end. The unfolding of God's people and his dealing with them in time and space.

Many of you will know the famous philosopher, theologian, Augustine, who lived in the 5th century in North Africa. He summed up the Bible in this way. The new is in the old concealed and the old is in the new revealed.

So in other words, when we read the Old Testament, we find the New Testament there. But we've got to do a little bit of digging about. And when we read the New Testament, we realize that the Old Testament is there as well, clear as day that we understand it.

[17:47] And that's why we're in Numbers chapter 9 this evening. In it, we read God's commandments, particularly concerning the celebration of the Passover. That comes about in all sorts of different places as well through the Old Testament.

Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that God promised and everything that God's people did in the Old Testament. So when we read about things like sacrifices and ceremonies and the tabernacle and the priesthood and all these sort of things, they all are finding their fulfillment, we understand, of course, in Jesus.

He's the priest and he's the offering and he's the tabernacle and he's everything. It all is building up and revealing the wonderful Savior, Jesus.

Jesus. And so, when Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples on the Thursday before Good Friday, and that's what we read about in all the Gospels, he gave it a new purpose and a new meaning and he altered it so that we have it as we do today in Luke and chapter 22 and following and other passages like that.

Now, as I said before, later this evening we're going to share in what we call the Lord's Supper or communion or if you're an Anglican, the Eucharist. The Passover was given because God commanded it.

[19:15] It was a meal to remember what God had done for the people in saving them from Egypt and from slavery there. Deuteronomy in chapter 16, you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening when the sun goes down on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt.

The Passover celebration of God's people here in chapter 9 of Numbers was the very first time they celebrated the Passover after they left Egypt. Notice what it says there.

In the first month of the second year when they came out of Egypt. They came out of Egypt in the first year. God had said this is the beginning of time for you, the beginning of the years for you, the

first month of your year.

And on the 14th day they celebrated that very first Passover when the lambs were slaughtered and their blood was put upon the doorposts of each house so that they'd be protected from God's plague.

And in fact, chapter 9 and what we read there takes place before the beginning of chapter 1. It's not in chronological order because if you turn back to chapter 1 of Numbers and verse 1 we read there the Lord spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year.

[ 20 : 45 ] This is the first month of the second year. So why is it here? Well, because ultimately what we're reading about is not so much how they shared in the Passover but certain regulations concerning those who were to eat the Passover particularly these men who were unclean.

And as those of you who remember long ago we read through Numbers and a lot of it was to do with uncleanness and purity before the Lord and so on and so forth.

So that's why it's here in this place. Now, some of these instructions that we read and remember they were given by God to the people are very appropriate and helpful for us today as we share in the Lord's Supper but some of them have been changed as I said by Jesus fulfilling and transforming them and so we're going to look at these things as they come out in chapter 9 and apply them with the New Testament binoculars it were glasses glasses and see what God is saying to us.

First of all did you notice there verses 2 make the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. The first thing is this that the Passover was eaten at an appointed time.

It couldn't just be eaten whenever they felt like it they might just like we might say well next week I think I'll have lamb for supper because you know it's on a special offer at Aldi this week. No it had to be at an appointed time.

[ 22 : 13 ] It had to be at a particular appointed time of the day. Do you notice that? Verse 3 celebrate it at the appointed time at twilight just as the sun was going down and it also had to be on one day only of the year the 14th day of the first month.

Verse 3 as well in accordance with its rules and regulations. As I said that was the exact anniversary of when those Passover lambs had been slain and that night when they'd been driven out by the Egyptians and been set free from their slavery there.

The misery of the oppression that they'd endured as a people for hundreds of years. Now there were only two exceptions weren't there for changing the date of the Passover.

If you read there in verse 9 the Lord said to Moses tell the Israelites when any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body all way on a journey they are still to celebrate the Lord's Passover but they're to do it on the 14th day of the second month at twilight.

So only two possibilities two possibilities either the 14th day of the first month 14th day of the second month no other time through the year could they celebrate the Passover just once a year.

[ 23 : 34 ] Now when we come to the Lord's Supper as we share it together here we realize that Jesus did not make any such stipulation or restriction. He didn't say you can only do this on the Thursday before Easter because that's when I celebrate it with my disciples or you can only do it on a Sunday morning or only do it on a Sunday evening or so on.

He laid us no restrictions whatsoever. We can celebrate the Lord's Supper whenever we wish to whenever we want to. that's why if you've been part of other churches different churches through your Christian life you'll know that they have different ways of doing the Lord's Supper.

If you're Presbyterian then it's usually perhaps just once or twice a year and they make a great big fuss in the right sense of the word about it. They'll have a communion season they call it where they have a month of special meetings all leading up to the taking of the communion and they hold it very specially.

If you've been in a brethren assembly then you'll know that they have it every single Sunday morning whatever happens that's my phone I should have turned it off sorry whatever happens every Sunday morning others of course have it in different frequencies in different times and we ourselves like many other churches hold it probably once or twice a month.

No restriction about the appointed time there's a freedom and that's what we're going to find as we go through looking at the Lord's Supper in comparison to the Passover. Now the next thing that we realize as well that there was not only an appointed time but there was acceptable food excuse me a second fancy not doing this and turning it off before sorry there was acceptable food look at verse

11 they are to eat the lamb together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs there are certain things they could eat they couldn't just eat whatever they want say we're going to celebrate the Passover but you know we fancy some beef or we fancy some well they wouldn't eat pork of course as you know but we fancy some other sort of meat or we don't like the lamb etc.

[ 25 : 41 ] No they were to do it with this special food there was lamb there was bitter herbs and there was unleavened bread now it's pretty clear why they ate the lamb the lamb reminded them of that lamb that was slain slaughtered and whose blood was put upon the doorposts that protected them from that plague in fact Exodus chapter 12 God said to them when I see the blood I will pass over that's where the phrase Passover comes from they were passed over in the sense of they were not touched by the plague but the firstborn of the children and the animals of the Egyptians were killed the second thing that they were to eat were bitter herbs they were to remind them of the bitter experiences of what it was like living with the Egyptians one of the things that happened as soon as they were set free from Egypt many of them started to complain and say you know

Egypt was so much better than you think it was in the good old days in Egypt this was only a matter of months after they'd been there forgetting that they'd been beaten half to death and enslaved or we had cucumber and we had all the onions when they got hungry the bitter herbs which remind them that that time before God saved them was a bitter time a grievous time a sad time an unpleasant time and God had saved them and then they were to eat unleavened bread you know what that means it's bread without yeast flat bread pita bread naan bread cream crackers why were they to eat that because they were leaving in a hurry those of you who bake your own bread know that if you put yeast you've got to leave it to rise before you can bake it no they didn't have time to do that they were in a hurry they had to leave in a hurry and they were to eat this unleavened bread in fact around the time of the Passover they had a whole week of eating unleavened unyeasted bread to remind them of what God had done for them what about us should we eat lamb and unleavened bread and so on well we aren't to eat lamb that lamb was a picture of the Lord Jesus that's what we sang in some of our hymns have you noticed that about worshipping the lamb in heaven they're worshipping Jesus because his great work was to be that sacrificial lamb for us he was the one who died and as we'll see by his blood has protected us and saved us from that destruction that we deserve and in 1 Corinthians chapter 5

Paul writes Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed so Jesus gave us different symbols didn't he to remind us of his saving work we're to eat bread and drink wine the bread symbolises his body he spoke of himself didn't he there's the bread of life and Paul reminds us here in 1 Corinthians and chapter 11 I received from the Lord verse 23 so we know this is God's instruction just as it was God's instruction to Moses on the night he was betrayed he took bread when he gave thanks he broke it and said this is my body the bread does not become anything but bread it doesn't change it doesn't take on the appearance or the substance or any way the body of Jesus it's purely a picture of his body the bread of life given for us well shouldn't we eat unleavened bread if that's what Jesus used which he would have certainly done on the night of the Passover he doesn't give us that restriction doesn't have to be crackers or as I said pita bread doesn't matter what sort of bread it is what matters is that we do it by faith that we have faith in Christ who gave his body for us to suffer and die in our place then we also of course the Lord Jesus took the cup didn't he and we know that that was wine and he gave his disciples and so Paul says in the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me the wine that we drink is a symbol of Jesus' blood poured out for us as we read there and again here in Luke and chapter 22 this cup is the new covenant in my blood are we only to drink fermented wine because Jesus gave it to his disciples no I don't think it makes a great deal of difference whether we drink fermented wine

I know that some high Anglican churches use port I think somebody said to me once but it's not the point it's the faith it's the action and looking to Christ so in fact Jesus speaks about in that meal the day when he will drink again of the fruit of the vine grape juice is fine in fact I think if we wanted to use ribena or whatever else it doesn't matter we mustn't get hung up as it were in these things but rather we're to remind ourselves again that this drink it reminds us that Jesus' blood has cleansed us from our sins 1 John chapter 1 verse 7 the blood of Jesus' son purifies us from all sin that's why we have the bread and the cup they are the acceptable food in that sense but then we read as well don't we hear as we did of those people who were absent so we've had appointed time and acceptable food and absent people and we mentioned them already those that were unclean

because they touched a dead body and God includes as well those who were on a journey and weren't able to be there to eat the Passover there were some people who could not share in the Passover meal and interesting isn't it they knew themselves to be unclean they knew themselves some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body they came to Moses and said what should we do we know that we can't take of this Passover meal perhaps they had buried a family member and it meant of course naturally they'd have been in contact with their body so why does God say that somebody is unclean who touches a dead body in the Old Testament is it because he was forward thinking in the matter of hygiene we know that dead bodies can contain all sorts of germs and things no it wasn't for that at all

God commanded them that those who came in contact with a dead body must be separated from the rest of God's people from the community for seven days later on in Numbers 19 and we'll come to it in about three or four years we'll say about how somebody who was unclean could be cleansed with the water of cleansing and that was a special mixture of water and the ashes of a heifer that had been offered to God and some wood and so on that was to be a symbol of God cleaning them and making them clean again but for seven days they would be unclean why?

[ 33 : 18 ] doesn't seem all a bit unnecessary we've got to remember again dear friends what death is all about death is the consequence of sin in the Garden of Eden when God created the world and everything was good he said to Adam and Eve don't eat of that tree don't disobey me because in the day you disobey me in the day that you sin you will die death is the consequence of sin and God is so holy that even when we are in contact or in the Old Testament in contact with those who have died then there is a sense of association with sin God is too holy that he cannot enter have those enter his presence so the person themselves had become so many unclean they hadn't sinned in that sense and done anything bad or wicked or wrong but they still had to wait until they were clean again to share in the Passover well how does that relate to us dear friends as we take communion well it's very clear from what

Paul has to say here in 1 Corinthians 11 that we are not to take communion if we are living a sinful life we're not to take communion of course if we are not Christians because ultimately it's an act of faith in what Jesus has done for me he died for me he took my sins he bore my sacrifice he cleansed me with his precious blood if it's not personal then there's nothing to do with us we must have that true faith in Jesus but especially if in our lives there is sin that we have not confessed especially in our lives if there are things that we have done that we've not repented of or that we are allowing to continue then we are eating in a wrong way that's why when Paul writes to the Corinthians he gives them these clear instructions about how they must examine themselves verse 28 everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat at bread drink of the cup what are we to examine ourselves for well first of all it may well be that we have a wrong relationship with other believers what was happening in the church in Corinth was that there were those who were rich and there were those who were poor and those who were rich and were eating and getting drunk and those who were poor had nothing it was more not so much like we have here but more of a fellowship lunch in one sense but it was especially centered upon

Christ perhaps there's unforgiveness in your own life towards another Christian perhaps you haven't made up and sorted things out where you've fallen out perhaps you have an arrogant or proud spirit towards some other Christians in some way or another in your own life you know there are things that have made you unclean before God and you haven't dealt with them you haven't confessed them haven't put them right and God's word is very clear Jesus Paul makes it very very clear here he says that's why many of you are weak and ill and a number have in fact died God counts it as a serious thing if we are more discerning with our regard to ourselves we'd not come under such judgment we're not to take communion in an unworthy way when any whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup verse 27 of the Lord in an unworthy manner what's that we're sinning against the body and blood of

Jesus serious isn't it unworthy coming with a sense as it were like I put it counting sin as unimportant counting sin as trivial counting sin as something well it doesn't really matter because ultimately what we're doing is indeed sinning against the body and blood of Jesus because it was his body and blood that has brought forgiveness and freedom from sin and if we count sin as trivial then we count the cross as trivial and the sacrifice of Jesus as trivial and therefore we eat in a wrong attitude and spirit we must examine ourselves that's why we do celebrate that's why good

Jesus has given us this feast as it were this communion table that we might be blessed as we remember that Jesus has taken all our sins at the cross that we might remind ourselves again there is full forgiveness but in doing so that we remind ourselves that sin is not to have a part in our lives it doesn't mean that if we have sinned which we all have done today and we do every day that we can't take communion it's not for the super spiritual and perfect people in this church because I can only think of none it's for each one of us who's a sinner but it's for those of us to make sure that we are right with

God walking with him of course we're not perfect we're never going to be perfect but in our hearts as we come we're saying Lord in one sense again I want to live for you I don't want sin to be the master of my life I want you Lord Jesus to rule in my life and then one more thing dear friends we see here as we close all are to share in the meal notice that there in verse 13 and 14 if anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover they must be cut off from their people for not presenting the Lord's offering at the appointed time they will bear the consequence of their sin a foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the Lord's Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations you must have the same regulations for both the foreigner and the native born what's it saying it says every Christian is to share in the Lord's supper just as every one of God's people in the Old

[ 39 : 22 ] Testament is to share in the Passover there's none of us who's exempt there's none of us that it isn't for it's for all of us it was counted a very serious thing in the Old Testament not to partake in the Lord's in the Passover why because in one sense by taking the Passover the Old Testament believer was saying I am one with God's people who were delivered out of Egypt I am I'm I'm one who's received the blessing of his wonderful work of salvation and the freedom he's given but if I don't take the Passover I'm saying in one sense to everybody else I'm not one with you I'm not part of you I'm not part of what God did in Egypt I didn't need him to do that for me do you see how serious it is now Jesus commanded all his disciples to share in the Lord's supper as Paul tells us here as well in the following directives I receive from the

Lord the Lord gives us this command now dear friends we're not under the law in that sense of the Old Testament it's not that if we don't take communion regularly we're sinful or we're wicked or we're denying that we're Christians but there's a loss of blessing there's a loss of blessing we're saying together when we eat of the same bread and drink from the same drink we're one we belong together we are of one body we're saying we're part of this local church and we're part of the church of Jesus eating the bread and the wine doesn't make us better Christians doesn't make us more acceptable to God doesn't mean that somehow we're more forgiven but we do it because the Lord commanded us to do it and he's commanded it for our blessing we're to put away all division when we come to the Lord's table notice there that foreigners were to share in it the Passover who were they well they were people who were not born as descendants of Abraham they were non-Jews but were part of the family the household of Jewish believers they all had to be circumcised if they were men and boys and they ate as well there was no division there was no sense that one was better than the other

God makes it very clear the same rules the same stipulation one of the reasons that Paul writes to the church in Corinth about the Lord's Supper is because there were divisions there notice how he says that at the beginning if you know the letter well you'll know right from the start they were divided against one another falling out with one another taking one another to court and suing one another and these divisions are bad they're unhealthy they're wrong each and every one of us is a sinner saved by grace washed in the precious blood of Jesus born again of the Holy Spirit heading to that same home not one better than the other not one worse than the other we are one in Christ Jesus so finally dear friends just as we're going to sing part of a hymn in a moment but as we come this is what I want you to please keep in your minds first of all how should we share then in the Lord's

Supper well first of all we do it by remembering God's greatest work of salvation for us the cross verse 23 here I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread and said when we come to the table let's remember the price that was paid for us that Jesus the Lamb of God was slain for you and for me secondly let us come with clean hearts let us come examining ourselves or in one sense even praying Lord Jesus by your Holy Spirit search my heart as the psalmist says see if there's any wicked way within me are there things that we're holding on to that are wrong through attitudes and forgiveness and so on then now

is the time for us to put them right with God Lord forgive me for my sins help me to turn away from them help me to live that life for you as I should and thirdly dear friends let us come together with all believers as we do together now it's good at times if we can share communion with those who can't get here didn't mention that really but those who are the travelers who are away we have older folk who are housebound folk who are unwell or folk for some reason or other aren't able to share in the Lord's

Supper it's good to be able to do that in the home with a few believers together but how wonderful it is that we can do this together as believers see the Passover was in a family home with all the family taking part we are the church family and we are to share together that's why we have here so then my brothers and sisters when you gather together to eat you should all eat together let us come with that sense of commitment to one another as the people of God so we're going to sing first two verses of a hymn and then we're going to take a few moments quiet to examine ourselves before the Lord and then we're going to share together in this meal so we're going to sing verses one and two of the hymn that's going to come on the screen it's a hymn written by Stuart Townend particularly for the communion service behold the lamb we'll stand as we sing these first two verses let's remain standing as we say together the words of the grace the grace of our

[ 45 : 30 ] Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen