



Voice Ministries

NEW DEAL

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11: 23—29

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:28)

The UK government introduced a scheme for job-seekers called the New Deal, and more recently, a scheme for pre-schoolers named Fresh Start. Posters about the New Deal programme were prominently displayed in employment centres, proclaiming the opportunities for people to start over again — to make a new beginning.

The Lord's Supper has many meanings, one of them being a time and opportunity where we can start over and begin again. It's a time where we can make a mid-course adjustment to correct our direction, thus ensuring that we stay on the right path in accordance with God's desire for our lives. It's so easy for us to drift off course in our spiritual lives, even by just a little, and yet if ignored it takes such a lot to get back on course. Some people leave it for so long that without a new deal they might never make it.

Just imagine you were the captain of an ocean liner off on a world cruise with a shipload of passengers, when, due to a slight miscalculation, you find that the ship has drifted a couple of degrees of course. If you didn't rectify the situation straight away then you would end up miles from your destination, for to drift off course, even very slightly, is to miss the goal by a wide margin.

The Lord's Supper offers us an opportunity to adjust our course, making sure that we stay on the right track. It's a time for re-dedication to the will of God. Perhaps, as you review your life, you find that some little sin has managed to creep in, and that is causing you to drift away from the plotted path that keeps you in God's will. Unchecked, you'll find yourself further and further away from God's will, and you need an opportunity that will enable you to make that all-important correction mid-course. Always at the centre of His Father's will Jesus used the occasion of the Last Supper to demonstrate the means whereby we are able to reaffirm our dedication to that will. He reminds us all of the New Deal that was promised, ***This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood*** (Luke 22:20); and of His obedience to God's will for Him, ***For indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined*** (22:22).



The Lord's Supper is a time for rededication to the task of witnessing. The disciples were about to face their most strenuous period in their ministry to date. Christ chose the occasion of the Last Supper as the climactic moment of His ministry prior to the cross, in order to impart to them a new determination in order to face the trials that lay ahead.

The Lord's Supper is a time for self-examination. Scripture records the words of Paul to the church at Corinth, ***Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*** (1 Corinthians 11:28). It is certain that Paul placed the emphasis on the word '***himself***', for we do not presume to come to this moment in order to pass judgment on others. We are called to examine our own lives, not the lives of those around us. And Paul urges us to ensure that we judge the body rightly, for to partake of the Supper in any other way would be to do so unworthily (22:29).

Self-examination admits sin, whatever it may be and wherever it is in our lives, providing as it does an opportunity for us to be honest about ourselves before God. Simon Peter rushed into an affirmation of his faith without any real self-examination beforehand, and subsequently, because of his failure to see himself as he really was, he was placed in the humiliating position of denying Christ, not once but three times.

We may save ourselves from the humiliation of spiritual defeat if we take the time to examine ourselves deeply, and this should result in our turning away from sin and getting back on course. We can accept the encouragement of Scripture that, ***he who confesses and forsakes them (his sins) will find compassion*** (Proverbs 28:13b).

The Lord's Supper is a time for meditation on Christ's death. One of the main purposes of this Sacrament is to enable us to meditate on Christ's death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). Is it possible that the reason that many Christians do not feel fully committed to Christ because they seldom really meditate deeply upon His death? If you focus your mind upon the bruised and broken body of Christ upon the cross, contemplating the reality of His sacrifice on your behalf, then it will have a tremendous impression and influence upon your life.

The Lord's Supper is a time for humility; an opportunity to show pride the door in no uncertain terms, for as long as we harbour pride then we'll never be able to recognise the need to begin again. It's only in true humility that we're able to say, ***I am wrong; I have sinned. Please forgive me Lord, and let me begin again.*** We're reminded of our own weakness as we read the account of the disciples dispute



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amongst themselves as to who was the greatest (Luke 22: 24-27). The sin of pride makes us small as people, turning us into little more than squabbling children. If you find this a bitter pill to swallow, just look around at the way in which many people behave in the Church today, considering themselves to be more important than others by comparison. If we are to really follow Christ then we must seek to be like Him, and that means that we must seek to emulate His humility of self.

So, if you want to sign up for a New Deal and begin afresh, then you are in the right place at the right time, for the Lord's Supper is a time for a fresh dedication, self-examination, meditation on the death of Jesus Christ, and humility. If you want to claim this New Deal and begin again, then simply bow your head right now and tell the Lord, in your heart, that this is the choice that you have made.

Amen

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