

Just A Cup Of Wine?

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Good Afternoon to all of you! And certainly a good Last Day of Unleavened Bread to all those that may be watching this later on!

The lighting up here is always a little bit dim. I think I finally figured it out though. I was thinking about getting one of those— You know these little weird catalogs you get in the mail all the time? They sell these cats with the bill on them. There's two little lights on there. I thought about getting one of those or maybe one of those little lights with the band, you know, where you go out and look for night crawlers if you're a fisherman in the middle of the night. And I thought, "Well." I talked to my wife about that and thought, "Well, that might make me a little dorky looking." And she said, "Well, you don't really need any help with that!" (Laughter!) So I guess I'll—I think I finally found a solution. I'm just using bigger font on my notes. I just need to get one of those large old-person—no offense—old-person letter Bibles (laughter).

Speaking of different version of the Bible, I don't know if anyone has a red-letter edition. I happen to have a red-letter version in one of the software programs that I have. But anyhow, you may or may not know the origin of that red-letter edition of the Bible, that version that some folks have. It actually happened around the turn of the century. In 1899 a publisher by the name of Louis Klopsch (I think that's the way you pronounce his last name—anyhow, he was the publisher of the Christian Herald Magazine. And he actually produced the first red-letter edition. And all that was it was a biased attempt to remind readers of the blood of Jesus Christ. That's what the red letters represented, the blood of Christ, which is poured out for us. Anyhow that little bit of information comes from the book called How to Choose a Translation.

As we kept the Passover, we took the symbols of the broken bread and we were reminded of Christ's suffering. Then we took the cup of wine that symbolizes death.

Medical science tells us that the average human body holds from eight to twelve pints of blood. And they also tell us that if we lose more than forty percent of that without massive intervention, we're going to die. So take an average person, maybe ten pints of blood. That's four pints. If we lose that and we don't get transfusions, if we don't get immediate help, we're going to die. The skin color's going to turn ashen. Skin's going to be cold to the touch. The heart, because it has no blood to pump, there's no volume there. It begins to fail and you have the cardiac response is going to be failure and death follows.

Jesus Christ did die. His blood was poured out onto the ground. As we reflect on that, His sacrifice which we did when we took that cup, that symbolic cup of wine, we need to

kind of ask ourselves, "Does it end there? Is it just a cup of wine? Is that all that means to us?"

Let's be turning over to John 6, chapter 6.

We could think about the way the world looks at these symbols. You know other people keep the Passover. It's been around for a long time. The Passover sets that we use that are actually communion sets that we buy from a Christian supply, but other religions keep that but they look at it in a different way.

They look at those symbols—actually the one major church in the world actually thinks that they have the power, their ministry or their priests have the power to actually change those symbols, the bread and the wine, into the actual body of Christ.

Some people take a rather radical view of that. They view that, taking the wine and taking the bread, as some form of cannibalism, those symbols of cannibalism. You know in the Church of God we don't believe that.

We believe what it says right here in John 6 and beginning in verse 53, actually verse 53 through 56. And this is from the NIV.

John 6:53. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

54) Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

55) For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. (NIV)

Some translations might say "true food, true drink."

John 6:56. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (NIV)

But going over to verse 63, He explains what He's talking about because, as you recall, from that account there in John, the disciples were having a hard time with that and so were other people that heard that. So He says in verse 63, He explains:

John 6:63. The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (NIV)

That's also from the NIV.

So Christ is actually teaching His disciples here; before the fact, He's teaching them about the symbols. And we know, we understand just from those verses there and especially that last verse that what those symbols really mean is Christ living in us. That's what they really mean. It's talking about a way of life.

We conduct the ceremony. We go through the ritual, if you want to put it that way, of the symbols. We do the foot washing that symbolizes humility. We take the bread; we take the wine. But we focus on the way of life of Christ living in us. That's what we should be focusing on. And just as we take those symbols once a year—

Or more often like some religions do. They do that more often, but far too many of the times—and we don't want to get in the same mode—they forget about it. They take the symbol. Sometimes they do it every week. They take the symbols and then that's all there is to it. That's the end of it right there.

But we do that. We take those symbols because we're instructed to do that in remembrance of Christ's death. But our focus after that ritual is that we're trying to live God's way of life. We want the Father and Jesus Christ to live in us. And we want to do that the way they would want.

And again the broken bread focuses on the suffering of Christ. Let's look at some of the details about His death. One of the first things we'll notice when we start studying and looking into this—and maybe we review this; maybe we don't prior to the Passover or during the Days of Unleavened Bread—but one of the first things we'll notice is that no one expected Him to die!

Let's turn over to Matthew 16. And I'm going to go through verses 21 through 26. And this is from my New King James. Matthew 16 beginning in verse 21:

Matthew 16:21. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

22) Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (NKJ)

"This isn't going to happen!"

Matthew 16:23. But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (NKJ)

Again He was pointing out something here. This whole idea is that the disciples needed to learn that they needed to change their way of life. And they were actually being brought to this point. And He's explaining these things a little bit; you know a little piece here, a little piece there as He goes along.

But you have to think about the situation there because even though the disciples and the Jews that maybe heard this, the other people that heard this, they knew about those Old Testament Prophecies, but here was the Messiah in the flesh. And even some of the Jews started to believe that besides the disciples that this really was the Messiah. And you can kind of just gather from the account where the disciples wanted to know "Who was the greatest?" They kind of saw this as maybe a ground for an opportunity to

get in on the Kingdom. They wanted the Kingdom to be established from that point. And we have to remember too that these folks have been looking forward to this for generations.

But in verse 24 through 26:

Matthew 16:24. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself [a little bit more of this; deny himself], and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25) "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26) "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (NKJ)

And we know from the Greek there, we know *the soul* is talking about *the breath*. Just simply gone, we just die.

And they, no doubt, didn't quite get this at this point, but again He's telling them about His impending death which really they were kind of in a state of denial. They didn't really want that to happen—His death and His sacrifice and the effect that would have on their lives beyond this.

And we, all of us today, have all of the references, all the material that we have. We have our computer programs. We have all kinds of things. And so we can, with that historical hindsight, we can look at those Old Testament prophecies and we can look at the New Testament account of where Christ was crucified and see that He did die. And in fact, become sin for us, which we see over in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians 5 and in verse 21, this again from the New King James:

2 Corinthians 5:21. For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJ)

So again, we know from our perspective that Christ died for us—the whole world really! And we know that we're reconciled by God, by and through the blood of Christ, by that sacrifice that He went through. It says—just as a reference; you don't need to turn there—but Romans 5:9. It says, "We're justified by His blood." Ephesians 1:7 says, "We have redemption through His blood." Ephesians 2 verse 13 says, "We're made near by the blood of Christ." And there's so many more Scriptures!

If you just look up *blood* in a concordance, there's probably hundreds of references to blood. It goes back to the Old Testament, to the sacrifices. It comes to the New Testament and we begin to see what all those things represented.

But when we look at that there in 2 Corinthians 5, what does it really mean there to "become the righteousness of God in Him"? Let's go to verses 14 and 15. So what does

that mean because of that sacrifice we can become the righteousness of God in Him?
In verse 14 through 15:

2 Corinthians 5:14. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;
15) and He died for all, that those who live (NKJ)

And here's the point:

2 Corinthians 5:15b. should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (NKJ)

And let's turn over to Romans 12 and let's put this together. So how do we do that? How do we become the righteousness for Him? And then we put that together with this comment here that we "should no longer live for ourselves." In Romans 12—and you may not even have to turn here. This should be so familiar to us we've read it maybe thousands of times! Romans 12 verses 1 and 2:

Romans 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2) And do not (NKJ)

We can insert there, "Do not any longer":

Romans 12:2b. be conformed to this world, but (NKJ)

He goes on to say and we can also insert in there, "Now that Christ's sacrifice has been applied for us upon repentance, upon our baptism":

Romans 12:2 continued. be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJ)

So the answer to that question then becomes: How do we become the righteousness of God in and through Him? Is if we change our lives! That's how we do that! That's how we apply that sacrifice. We get rid of our carnally driven lives and start to change to a spiritual life. We begin to—our minds, even though we're just beginning in a process of conversion—we begin to make those changes.

So what does it mean to be a living sacrifice? What does that really mean to us? Those people that Paul was talking to at that point, they certainly knew what a sacrifice was. At least up to the time that Christ was crucified those sacrifices were still taking place in the temple. So they were very familiar with that. They saw it being done. They saw the blood. They knew what the blood represented. They knew that there was no forgiveness of sin—at least under the Old Testament Laws—unless there was blood. And that's why they had the animal sacrifices.

It interesting there though where Paul says, "I beseech you." That's a really interesting word. I looked that up. It basically means that he's exhorting them to be a living sacrifice. What he's telling them is to pursue a course of life, to change their behaviors. The word here in the Greek, at least my Vine's says that the Greek of that word *to beseech, to exhort*, it's in a prospective sense. In other words, it's a looking forward to the future rather than looking back.

We can put that together with what Paul said that he knew that he hadn't achieved the spiritual state that he wanted to be in, but he pressed towards the mark. He looked forward. He didn't look back. And that's kind of the way that he's telling them to go forward from there to change their lives. In other words, "From this point on"—is what he's really saying—"be a living sacrifice for God the rest of your life."

And that's the position we're in. That's what we're called to be. So how do we do that? We know it's not literal. We know that Paul said, in another place—actually 1 Corinthians 15—he says, "I die daily." And we know he didn't do that. So he meant that metaphorically. So how do we apply it? How do we be a sacrifice daily? How do we not just drink that cup of wine symbolizing Christ's death and then forget about it the rest of the time?

I heard a minister say one time that there's two very basic ways that we become sacrifices, that we sacrifice our lives. We sacrifice for God and we sacrifice for people. How do we sacrifice for God? What does it mean to sacrifice for God? You know God doesn't need anything from us, but what He does want from us is to change. Right? He wants us to change our lives. And the major way we do that is how?

The major way we do that is to build our relationship with Christ and with God the Father. One way that we do that—and again this is very basic stuff—one way we do that is we sacrifice our time for prayer. Our lives are measured in time, right? I can certainly relate to that as I get a little bit older. David asked God to teach him to number his days, to look at it.

And I'm looking at mine. I'm just slightly south of seventy. And in a few months—I won't have a cake, but if I did have a cake and I was blowing out the candles, I might not get my breath back! Seventy-years-old plus two or three seconds—poof! Smash! Right over into the frosting (laughter)! Neil's laughing. He's saying, "Hey, for a diabetic that ain't a bad way to go. Get a mouthful of sugar!" Anyhow I'm trying to be a little humorous there.

But my threescore and ten's almost up. So we have a limited amount of time. We all do. And sometimes it's hard for us. We have to determine in our own mind that we're going to make the time to talk to God, to build that relationship with God because that's the only way we're going to do it.

It's kind of like when I retired. Foolish me! When I retired, I thought, "Well, I'm going to play some golf. Maybe going to ride my motorcycle. I'm going to do a few things like this and that. Kind of a carefree life." Hah! One of my wife's favorite sayings is "No rest for

the wicked." I just haven't figured out why she's always looking at me when says that (laughter)!

I have a little thing that I laminated. You may have seen one of these years ago. I don't know. I used to have that taped to my mirror until we moved. And now I kind of stick it in my Bible, but it's a little poem about taking the time to pray. It says:

I got up early one morning, and rushed right into the day.

I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me and heavier came each task.

Why doesn't God help me? I wondered.

He answered: "You didn't ask."

So I wanted to see joy and beauty but the day toiled on gray and bleak.

I wondered why God didn't show me.

He said, "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence.

I used all the keys at the lock.

God gently and lovingly chided, "But you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning ...

The person changed.

I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day.

I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray!

That's a pretty good point for us!

Here's another one. You may recognize this.

We call on Him when storm clouds gather.

We call on Him to light our darkest day.

Why must it be that only when we're lonely
and hopes are dim, we call on him?

Why don't we call on Him before we lose our way
to count our blessings and thank Him while we may?

We call on Him when no one else will answer.

We ask of Him a reason to go on
when our cup of joy becomes a cup of sorrow
filled to the brim, we call on Him.

Why don't we call on Him before we lose our way
to count our blessings and thank Him while we may?

Anybody recognize that? It's an old Elvis Presley gospel song.

We had a sermon recently. Rick gave a sermon recently on fasting. How much time do we sacrifice for fasting? I don't know about you, but that's not really at the top of my A-list of things to do. It takes sacrifice to do that. We used to schedule fasts. In fact, when we heard that sermon, my wife and I both said later on at home, "Ouch! Ouch!" Because we just have a tendency to let that slip. You know you have to think about that.

Maybe the reason that we don't get our prayer time in, don't do fasting, don't do the things we need to be doing, maybe there's just too much like Paul said; maybe there's too much conformance to the world. We haven't changed that enough. So we really have to take a look at that really hard sometime.

Rick also gave a sermon recently on humility. The main point of that sermon—at least the main point I got out of it—was that something's in our human nature that we have to sacrifice. And I mean sacrifice. That's pride! That's something that we all have. We see it all the time.

Let's turn over to Psalm 51. We may or may not have been here. I can't really tell you from the messages, from the things we've had during these Days of Unleavened Bread. Psalm 51 verses 16 and 17, look at the state that David came to in this Psalm of repentance here that was recorded for us. In Psalm 51 verses 16 and 17, again from the New King James:

Psalm 51:16. For You do not desire sacrifice, (NKJ)

That is of animals.

Psalm 51:16b. or else I would give *it*; (NKJ)

That'd be an easy out for David. That'd be an easy out for us today if we could do that. If we could just go down to the pet store and buy a turtle dove or something. We probably wouldn't go buy a calf. My wife wouldn't want to kill it anyway. We wouldn't do that, but that would be an easy out for us.

But going on, it says:

Psalm 51:16b. or else I would give *it*; you do not delight in burnt offering.

17) The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— (NKJ)

That sounds a whole lot like humility to me. That sounds like someone that has beat that pride, beat that self down to get to this point because of the things that he has done.

Let's finish the verse there.

Psalm 51:17b. these, O God, You will not despise. (NKJ)

And you've got to think about that for a minute. When you think of the situation that David was in—losing that child, the things that happened to him afterwards—basically the curses that God gave him because he was a bloody man. You've got to think: Did he fast? He certainly did.

And I'm not saying this to put a guilt trip on everybody. Of course, we need balance. It used to bother me a lot when we used to say, when we used to get prescriptive and say, "Well, you're never going to be in God's Kingdom unless you ..."—and I've heard that—"unless you pray an hour a day, unless you fast one day a month." You know on and on it goes. We have to have some balance. So there's no minimum on that and we're all different. We all have things to work out. And that's what I'm trying to express here. That's what I'm trying to say. We need to make that sacrifice individually in our mind.

What about study? Now that's something that we can really let slip through. We can get busy. Sometimes we just don't have the means to do that.

But again let's go back over to John 6. I'd like to read verse 63 again. Christ just went through and He taught His disciples and others that may have been listening there that they had to drink His blood, eat His flesh. And again, He explained that in verse 63 of John 6, where He said:

John 6:63. "It is the Spirit [that] gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak (NKJ)

And that's the food that He was talking about—the words that He spoke, the words that we should be living by, that we should be sacrificing for in our lives, to put them into practice in our lives.

John 6:63b. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. (NKJ)

That doesn't mean our life. That doesn't mean they're going to enhance our life. It means we're going to make the changes we need to do and make those changes for eternal life. That's what that means.

It takes time to study. We have to sacrifice time for that. A lot of times, we'd rather be doing something else. Everybody has busy lives. The world is engineered that way to where we have busy lives and lots of pressure, lots of it! Anybody that works for a living knows that, understands that. But God, again, He understands the circumstances that might prevent us from doing that.

I don't know if you've ever been in a situation where you've been distracted for a while. I was depressed for a long time. I didn't understand that at first. Most people that experience depression don't really know when it's happening to them. It just sort of creeps up on you and it becomes part of your life. And I didn't want to study. Frankly, I was mad at God for a while. And God understands that. He knows that. He will let you sort through that and work through that. And I did. And I'm sorry to say that, but I'll throw that out there as a bad example for me because that was just the state I was in.

But you know what? When I came back to the Bible, when I started listening—they were some DVD's from someone else—and when I started listening to that and started getting back into my Bible, it's just like I'd been in a desert and found this fabulous oasis. And I just drank that in. And sometimes tears would come to my eyes because of the things I was rediscovering. I knew all that. I just let it go for a while.

Again, the point there is our Bible study should be an adventure. It should be a discovery.

How about sacrificing for other people? Partly we can do that from the prayer time that we spend. It takes time to do that. I remember one time back in the old days when we had The Worldwide News. And a lot of people here—I know I'm seeing enough gray heads out there—they remember that old tabloid that came out. And the prayer requests that were in there—I watched that thing grow from a half to a page to a page, to a page and a half. Remember that? Do you remember those days?

And my wife and I talked about it and I said, "It's a matter of capacity. We can't possibly pray for all these people!" What do we do? Say, "God, here's an umbrella. We'd like you to heal all these people under that umbrella."

We just have different situations. But to me the more that I can get to know people—and that takes sacrifice, doesn't it? To visit, to do the things that we do there—the more I get to know people, the more effectively I think I can pray them, because people usually talk to you if they're having a trial. Sometimes they're reluctant to do that, but if we're friendly enough, if we're open enough, we can learn and we can pray for them.

Serving and helping people—I remember one time years ago when we had— In the trities we had three deacons and all three of those areas had their hands full of widows. We had five widows that we watched out at one time in the Richland area. And one time we had a widow that was—she was dying. She was in a hospital. She was dying of congestive heart failure. She'd lost her husband and lived very poorly. She didn't have much. Anyhow she was dying and she went into a coma. And I'd go up there to see her and, of course, she was out of it. She didn't know what was going on, but I'd hold her hand. And sometimes even when I got ready to leave—I thought it was a while—she'd just hang onto my hand. It didn't matter and it didn't matter that it was me doing that. It could have been anybody.

But the point is that that was helping her just because somebody was there. And that's usually when we get closer to God. That's usually when we start letting go of all the little petty things, all those things that come between us, all the offences. All that kind of goes away. We just appreciate it because somebody cares, because somebody's there!

Matthew 5 where it talks about if you have a problem with your brother, go and reconcile with him. If someone said that didn't take some sacrifice to do that—some of us it takes more than others—I'd have to argue with it because it certainly does. That might even take some fasting in some cases to do that, to bury to put your pride away and just go talk to that person.

How about love? How much do we sacrifice for love? Christ actually taught us that. He said in Luke 14 where it talks about counting the cost. And all of us love our families. That's the natural, that's the human love that we have. We take care of our families. We'd step in front of a bus for our wife, or our grandchildren, something like that.

But what did Christ tell us there in Luke 14? We won't turn over there, but we all know that. It says we have to love them less. He's trying to introduce to us love on a much higher plane. That takes a lot of sacrifice. That takes sacrificing our human nature before we can even begin to approach that.

It's kind of interesting the context of that particular section there in Luke 14. I don't know whether you recall it or not, but the Parable of the Great Supper just before that. To me that's all in the context. That's all part of that. And we think that Great Supper is the marriage supper. Right? We've been taught that. And it seems to make sense.

But going down into that parable, all the people that made excuses, that didn't want to come to the supper, by extrapolation we could say, "Didn't want to be in God's Kingdom"? They made excuses. They didn't want to make any sacrifice to be there is what it amounts to, if we want to put it that way. So it takes an entire lifetime for us to begin to learn God's love, to sacrifice our own self-love and replace it with God's love.

We won't even go to those Scriptures where it talks about loving your enemies. In the first place, Laura says I don't have time. But we won't even talk about those. That's entirely against our human nature, our nature reaction to that. And we just can't do that.

All of this mostly revolves around time. Right? And it's how we determine to use our time. Let's go over to Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4, actually the last verse in Ephesians 4 and then going on the first two verses in chapter 5 of Ephesians. Again from New King James, verse 32 of Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:32. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJ)

Going on to chapter 5:

Ephesians 5:1. Therefore be imitators (NKJ)

Some versions say, "followers":

Ephesians 5:1b. of God as dear children.

2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (NKJ)

So He sacrificed. That's the kind of love we have to aspire to.

But what does it tell us in verse 15 and 16?

Ephesians 5:15. See then that you walk circumspectly, (NKJ)

In other words, be careful how you live

Ephesians 5:15b. not as fools [which means unwise, because it says] but as wise, 16) redeeming the time, (NKJ)

Just making the most of it, using what time we have. And for some of us that's not very much.

Ephesians 5:16b. because the days are evil. (NKJ)

How much more should we heed these words as each year passes—as each year passes?

I know most of you have probably heard of an individual, Viktor Frankl? He was an Austrian Jew that was thrown into the concentration camps during World War II by the Germans. And being a psychiatrist by profession, he began to analyze the people that were in the concentration camp. He realized, after a while looking at behaviors, that some people were able to cope better than he was in some cases and better than others. They were just coping better. They were helping other people. They were giving their food away to other people—what little they had.

He later on developed an entire therapy around what he discovered. Because what he discovered and the way he described it—he wrote a book called Man's Search for Meaning. He wrote a lot of books, but that's probably the most well-known one. He described what he saw. And he said, "When something happened"—and you've got to think of the hideous conditions those individuals in a concentration camp because something happening to them could be traumatic. And what happened was from the time something happened to the time they reacted to it—like we might carnally—by the time they reacted to it, he called *the space*. And in that *space* they decided, they determined in their own mind how they were going to react to what was happening. And they coped from that. They went on from that. There was just that little period of time where they made a choice.

And you know we're in the same situation because we just kept the Passover. There's another year to the next Passover. That's *a space*. That's *a space* where we can make determination; we can make choices; and we can make the changes that God wants us to make.

And again, we need to choose to make those sacrifices that are necessary to change our lives. All of us need to do that. I think we've taken a harder look at that this year—maybe it's because we're getting older; maybe it's because running out of time we're taking a look at that.

So, as we took those symbols—the bread, the wine—we need to remember that it's not just the bread. It's not just the cup of wine, but there's a representation there. God gave His life for us and He wanted us to take His life within us and change our lives. If we do that—and this all involves sacrificing. It involves sacrificing the self. So if we do that—sacrifice the self—that's not only going to make our lives better now, which we all want really, but it's going to lead to everlasting life. And that's what we want to do. So we just want to remember.

I keep a little cup—I have the advantage of having some of those. I keep a little cup on my desk. If somebody thinks that's an icon and they get worried about that, it's not. Just a reminder to me because I want to remember that what I need to be doing in my life that's not just a cup of wine!